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Stories of Sibling Maltreatment: The Instigators and a Dyad of Instigator and Victim

by

Tamara D. Hanoski ©

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fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Dedication

For the participants who took part in this study.

For without their courage and willingness,
there would be no stories to tell.

Abstract

Although sibling maltreatment has been found to be extremely common in many families, it has been labeled as one of the "hidden" forms of family violence (Gelles, 1997, p. 96), as it is often not recognized as significant or damaging to the individuals involved. In recent years, both quantitative and qualitative researchers have begun to investigate conflict and maltreatment between siblings, with findings indicating that not only do many siblings display high levels of aggressive acts with one another, but that there can be extremely negative ramifications by being either the instigator or victim of sibling maltreatment. Many of these previous studies have focused on the victims' perspective of their sibling relationships. This study attempted to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon from the instigators' point of view. In addition, a sibling dyad was studied in order to provide both siblings' perspectives on the quality of their relationship. Findings indicate a high level of negative sibling interactions, as well as a tendency to deny or minimize the severity of these altercations. The participants provided many reasons for the development of maltreatment, explained factors which aided them in moving past their negativity to create a closer relationship, and shared the interpretations they have made about their sibling experiences. These findings were used to inform several counselling implications and parenting practices, as well as to identify future research directions that would prove fruitful in developing more insight into the phenomenon of sibling maltreatment.

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[1]CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

> "Cut it out!" I warned him. "Stop it!" And when he didn't stop, I grabbed him. Jumped on him and *made* him stop. He screamed loudest when I yanked that fucking hat off his head. He began fighting back with more strength than I thought he had. The two of us toppled off the back of the couch, knocked over an end table, rolled across the floor. A lamp fell; it didn't break but the shade got bent to shit. When I got on top of him and pinned his shoulders to the floor, he lunged up and spat in my face. That was it: I popped him one, in the nose. Put him in a choke hold while he was trying to get away from me. Gave him a couple good jabs in the ribs and tightened my grip around his neck. He gagged. Went limp.
>
> Wally Lamb, 1998, p. 352

Although the above vignette is from a fictional story, in reality such stories occur on a regular basis in the homes of many young children today. The occurrence of violence and maltreatment between siblings is a serious, but mainly unrecognized, phenomenon, which has been cited as the most prevalent form of family violence (Brody, Stoneman, McCoy & Forehand, 1994; Cicirelli, 1994; Finkelhor & Dzuiba-Leatherman, 1994; Herzberger & Hall, 1993; Montemayor & Hanson, 1985; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980; Tedeschi, 1997; Wiehe, 1998). Despite the high prevalence rate, Caffaro and Conn-Caffaro (1998) write that only 11% of child abuse research over the past three decades has been focused on siblings. It may be that sibling maltreatment occurs *so* frequently that the general public, researchers, and social service communities have come to accept and normalize such maladaptive behaviour (Gelles, 1997; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996). In fact, sibling maltreatment has been so drastically overlooked that it has been labeled a "hidden" form of family violence, along with elder and parent abuse (Gelles, 1997, p. 96).

---

[1] This study follows from my earlier study on the victims of sibling maltreatment (Hanoski, 1998). As the current study includes similar background literature and follows some of the same methods of my previous study, many of the same references have been used. While every attempt has been made to present information in an original fashion, some sections are similar to this earlier work.

Many people believe that conflict between siblings is a natural and inevitable aspect of the sibling relationship. As a result, violent acts between siblings tend to be minimized or ignored by parents and caregivers, who believe that these interactions are not harmful to the children's development (Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996; Kahn, 1988; Steinmetz, 1977a; Wiehe, 1998). However, researchers have indicated that the relationship between siblings can have a tremendous impact on one's social, emotional, and cognitive development, and that maltreatment from a sibling can have many long-term negative effects. For example, findings have indicated that victims of sibling maltreatment can suffer from a variety of ramifications, such as depression, anxiety, low self esteem, inability to trust others, and dysfunctional adult relationships (Bennett, 1990; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Cicirelli, 1995; Graham-Bermann, Cutler, Litzenberger, & Schwartz, 1994; Hanoski, 1998; Perry, Perry, & Kennedy, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994; Stocker, Lanthier, & Furman, 1997; Wiehe, 1997b). Researchers have also indicated that instigators of sibling maltreatment can suffer from negative effects, such as being rejected by peers, engaging in antisocial and/or delinquent behaviour, and perpetuating aggressive behaviour in adulthood (Bank, Patterson, & Reid, 1996; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Dunn, 1988; Dunn & Munn, 1986; Vespo, Pedersen, & Hay, 1995; Tedeschi, 1997; Volling & Belsky, 1992). Wiehe (1997b) writes that as long as people in society continue to minimize or tolerate maltreatment between siblings, these symptoms and negative effects will continue to be unrecognized and ignored, and those involved in these dysfunctional relationships will continue to suffer.

Purpose of the Study

In light of the epidemic of violent youth in our society, it is extremely important that we begin to gain an understanding of why children and adolescents become aggressive with one another. Incidents such as school shootings and gang violence have created fear and awareness of the potential fury and destruction of which our youth are capable. However, attention is usually focused on children acting out against other, non-familial members of society, even though the greatest level of violence is occurring in our homes. Researchers have indicated that children tend to be more violent with their own siblings than with their peers or with other people outside of the family (Brody, Stoneman, MacKinnon, & MacKinnon, 1985; Dunn, 1984; Newman, 1994; Steinmetz, 1978). Studies have also indicated that violent relations between siblings can lead to violence in other interpersonal relationships (Dunn, 1984; Gully, Dengerink, Pepping, & Bergstrom, 1981; Loeber, Weissman, & Reid, 1983; Perry et al., 1992; Steinmetz, 1978). Thus, people need to become more aware of the prevalence and seriousness of violence between siblings, in order to protect the victims and to promote the healthy development of both the victims and instigators, as well as to lessen the level of violence in current society.

There were two main purposes to this study. This research served as a follow up study to an earlier project I conducted on the victims of sibling maltreatment (Hanoski, 1998). After hearing the stories of those who had been the recipients of violence from a sibling, I wanted to examine the phenomenon of sibling maltreatment from the perspective of the instigators, in order to gain an understanding of some of the reasons behind the occurrence of sibling maltreatment and the feelings and perceptions of those who maltreat their brothers and sisters. By conducting in-depth, narrative interviews of the experiences of the participants, my first purpose was to gain a fuller understanding of sibling relations in general, and sibling maltreatment in particular, in order to help build an awareness and understanding of violent sibling behaviour. I also hoped that the findings that emerged from the analysis of the data would provide insight that would aid in the development of prevention and intervention strategies for maladaptive sibling relationships, by elucidating some of the triggers and reasons the instigators have for maltreating their siblings.

The second purpose of the study was to hear the stories of a sibling dyad (an instigator of violence and the recipient of this violent treatment) in order to examine how their perceptions and feelings about their shared experiences were similar and different. I believed that this would be instrumental in gaining a fuller understanding of the phenomenon from "both sides of the story," taking into account the variety of perspectives that are involved. I also hoped that these findings would help aid in the development of counselling implications which could be used to help siblings heal their relationship and come to terms with any negative ramifications that they believed arose from sibling maltreatment.

The Research Questions

Sibling conflict and maltreatment have been studied to a limited degree in the past, with the majority of studies being quantitative inquiries. For example, several large scale national surveys have been conducted in order to determine prevalence rates (Steinmetz, 1977b; Straus et al., 1980) and other researchers have conducted experiments to determine the effects of gender, age, and age spacing on the quality of the sibling relationship (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Montemayor & Hanson, 1985). These studies have been extremely helpful in raising awareness of the extremely high prevalence rate of sibling maltreatment, as well as elucidating some of the factors involved in the phenomenon. However, the use of quantitative measures has limited the depth that could have been obtained in these studies and has resulted in superficial descriptions of an experience which contains much meaning to those who have experienced it (Hanoski, 1998).

In more recent years, researchers have begun to examine the phenomenon of sibling maltreatment qualitatively, by using interviews or questionnaires to explore the experiences of those who have been involved in maladaptive sibling relationships (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Crane, 1997; Hanoski, 1998; Wiehe, 1997b). Other qualitative inquiries have examined sibling relationships more generally, and seemed to inevitably include the topic of sibling maltreatment and the negative effects that can occur (Hapworth, Hapworth, & Heilman, 1993; Karlsbrug, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994). The importance of the phenomenon has been reinforced with these studies, as they have provided detailed descriptions of the experience, including the various forms of sibling maltreatment, reactions of parents, and negative ramifications. In addition, these researchers have commented on the yearning for closeness many siblings seem to feel for one another and provided strategies so that they can try to heal from the past and build healthier relationships (Hapworth et al., 1993; Karlsbrug, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994). While these studies are extremely informative and helpful in gaining a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, the descriptions of sibling maltreatment provided in these studies have largely been from the victims' point of view.

Thus, in the current qualitative study, I hoped to examine the experience from the instigators' perspective, in an effort to understand some of the reasons behind the occurrence of sibling maltreatment and the feelings and perceptions of those who have maltreated their brother or sister. I also wanted to recruit a sibling dyad as participants, in order to compare the stories between both members of a sibling system and see how their perceptions and feelings about their shared experiences were similar and different. Thus, the following research questions were addressed in this study: (1) How do instigators of sibling maltreatment perceive and interpret their experiences with their siblings? And (2) How do the instigator and victim from the same sibling dyad describe their experiences with their siblings? How are their perceptions, feelings, and interpretations the same, and how do they differ?

The Significance of the Study

Although researchers are studying sibling maltreatment more extensively, the phenomenon is still largely unrecognized by many parents, counsellors, and social service agencies. Many believe that sibling maltreatment is relatively uncommon, as compared to other forms of violence (Gelles & Cornell, 1985). As previously stated, prevalence studies have indicated that this is not the case, but many people throughout society have not yet acknowledged or accepted this information (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Wiehe, 1997b). Furthermore, many of the negative effects that have been attributed to other forms of family violence, such as depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, and the development of learned helplessness (Bennet, 1990; Herzberger, 1996; Straus et al., 1980; Widom, 1998), have yet to be connected to sibling violence by the general public, despite the fact that recent studies have indicated that children suffer from similar ramifications whether the abuse occurs at the hands of a sibling or a parent (Brody et al., 1994; Hanoski, 1998; Herzberger & Hall, 1993; Montemayor & Hanson, 1985; Straus et al., 1980; Wiehe, 1997b).

As previously stated, the perspective of the instigator of sibling maltreatment has been neglected in previous research. One of the main limitations of studies which only consider the victims' point of view is that the participant may be interpreting events which occurred in a much different way from his/her sibling or may have faulty recollection about the events which occurred (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Kahn, 1988). Furthermore, as I described in a previous study (Hanoski, 1998), victims of sibling maltreatment experience a great deal of confusion regarding *why* they were maltreated by a sibling. As stated by one victim: "I just remember thinking, that is so cruel. Why is he doing that? I'm his friend. I'm his sister. I knew I didn't deserve it...but I didn't know why he did it..." (p. 119). Thus, studies exploring the instigators' point of view may lead to greater insight with regard to the reasons why siblings are becoming aggressive and acting out against one another, which may in turn help with the development of appropriate prevention and intervention strategies.

My general goal in conducting this research was to provide descriptions of the experience from all points of view (ie. both the victims and the instigators) and to disseminate the findings in order to raise awareness of the frequency and severity of sibling maltreatment. It is my hope that with increased awareness, parents, teachers, counsellors, social service agencies, and the general public will come to see sibling violence in a similar way to other types of family violence, such as parental child abuse, so that necessary precautions and interventions can be implemented. It is extremely important that parents and counsellors become more aware of the issues and negative ramifications that can result from a dysfunctional sibling relationship, so that children are taught appropriate methods for dealing with conflict and do not act out their feelings in a manner which will hurt one another (Hanoski, 1998). Furthermore, it is important to ensure that instigators are not being reinforced for their aggressive actions by the silence and acceptance of such behaviour by the adults surrounding them.

Exploration Through The Use Of Narratives

As examination of the instigators' experiences is relatively new in the area of sibling maltreatment, this study was an exploratory one. My aim in studying the instigators was not only to clarify the instigating siblings' position and viewpoint, but to provide a broader picture of the phenomenon as a whole. In order to explore the perceptions and feelings of the instigators, I interviewed them individually and used the transcripts of these interviews to develop narratives, or stories, of their experiences. A similar process was followed with the sibling dyad, which was included in this study in order to provide a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon by hearing a story of sibling maltreatment from both siblings' perspectives. Each member of the dyad was interviewed separately, to give them an opportunity to voice their feelings and opinions openly and freely. These interview transcripts were also used to write narratives of the siblings' experiences.

The use of narratives is especially suited to qualitative inquiry, as narratives allow the researcher to provide a detailed account of the phenomenon in a way that provides the participant with the opportunity to share the parts of the experience which he/she feels are of utmost importance (Hanoski, 1998). Narratives have been described as being an integral part of the human experience, appearing in many different forms, such as lullabies, fairy tales, novels, movies, and television programs (Berger, 1997). Furthermore, Polkinghorne (1988) and Riessman (1993) write that narratives are one of the primary means by which individuals describe and make sense of the events in their lives, as they put experiences which are significant into meaningful wholes. Thus, the stories provided in this study allow the reader to gain an understanding of how each participant has made sense and meaning out of his/her sibling experiences.

I also approached this study from a hermeneutic perspective. Patton (1990) writes that hermeneutists use qualitative methods (in this case, narrative) to "establish context and meaning for what people do" (p. 85). He describes the hermeneutic approach as the study of interpretive understanding, or the meaning, of an experience. According to Polkinghorne (1988), the writing of narratives is a particular form of hermeneutic expression, where the researcher seeks to understand and make meaning out of an experience by creating a story out of the events which are described by the participants. My aim in using a hermeneutic, narrative approach was to provide stories which would capture the essence of the phenomenon of sibling maltreatment for each of the participants, as well as to allow for further interpretation from the researcher through the presentation of common themes, salient unique aspects of the phenomenon, and paradigm cases, which were used to develop an overarching "meta-story" of sibling maltreatment.

Overview

In the following chapter, I provide a comprehensive literature review on the phenomenon of sibling maltreatment. The chapter begins with a section in which some of the terms that are used in this study are defined. This section is included in order to clarify the difference between conflict and maltreatment, and describe specifically what is considered to be maladaptive behaviour between siblings. This is followed by a description of the previous research in the area, which includes a discussion of prevalence rates; experiments on gender, age, and age spacing; positive and negative effects of sibling conflict and maltreatment; and contributing factors to the development of a violent sibling relationship. The chapter is concluded with a description of prevention strategies and intervention programs.

In the third chapter, I discuss the method that was followed in this study. This includes a description of the philosophical underpinnings to the use of narratives and of hermeneutic research. I also describe the methods that were used to recruit participants and the procedures that were followed to collect and analyze the data. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of trustworthiness and ethical considerations. In chapters four and five, the narratives are presented and are then further analyzed into themes, exemplars, and paradigm cases; chapter four contains the data analysis for the instigators, while chapter five addresses the findings that were related to the sibling dyad. In the final chapter, I summarize the main findings, and discuss limitations, implications, and future research directions.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

One of the most confusing aspects of previous work in the area of sibling maltreatment is the fact that there has been a great deal of inconsistency with regard to the terms and definitions that have been used to describe sibling "conflict," " violence," and "abuse" (Cicirelli, 1995; Herzberger, 1996). Thus, I begin this chapter with a section defining these terms and describing how they were used in the present study. This is followed by a description of the previous research, including the prevalence rates of sibling violence, the developmental influences of one's sibling, the strength of the sibling bond, and the positive and negative effects that can arise through sibling conflict and maltreatment. I have also included sections on the contributing factors to a dysfunctional sibling relationship, as well as prevention and interventions strategies. The chapter is concluded with a description of the current study.

Definitions

Previous studies which have been conducted in the area of sibling maltreatment are somewhat confusing and difficult to interpret due to the fact that the terms "conflict," "violence," and "abuse" have not been defined appropriately or have been used interchangeably, even when being used to describe very different behaviours (Cicirelli, 1995; Herzberger, 1996; Kashani, Daniel, Dandoy, & Halcomb, 1992). This can make comparisons between studies difficult. The situation is further complicated by the fact that a certain degree of conflict between siblings is to be expected. There seems to be a very fine line between what would be considered to be acceptable and what would be considered to be destructive, and it is very difficult to pinpoint exactly when this line has been crossed. Furthermore, definitions can vary from culture to culture, or from person to person, depending on what each individual or social group considers to be an acceptable level of conflict (Cicirelli, 1995). This confusion has not only led to the belief that maltreatment between siblings is acceptable but has also likely lead to an under-estimation of the true level of sibling maltreatment (Herzberger, 1996). This is a disturbing thought, considering the fact that sibling violence has already been found to be the most prevalent form of family violence.

Definitions of "Conflict" and "Rivalry"

Many believe that a certain degree of adversity between siblings is inevitable and that not all incidents of "conflict" can be considered to be dysfunctional. Thus, as stated by Wiehe (1997b) and Freeman (1993), it is extremely important to be able to differentiate between acceptable levels of negative behaviour and behaviour which may be detrimental to a child's development. However, as stated by Caffaro and Conn-Caffaro (1998), the differences between the two are often vague and undefined by parents, counsellors, and social service agencies, as well as by siblings themselves.

For the purposes of this study, the term "conflict" will be used to describe behaviours which can be considered to be a natural aspect of the sibling relationship. "Conflict" can be defined as activities such as quarreling, fighting, resisting, opposing, denying, objecting, and protesting, which occur between two individuals who are in mutual opposition to one another (Cicirelli, 1990; Straus et al., 1980). Cicirelli states further that conflict occurs when two people disagree in their desires or ideas, when the disagreement involves some degree of emotionality, and when the individuals are directly opposing each other. The difference between conflict and maltreatment is the fact that conflict involves mutual opposition, whereas maltreatment is unidirectional (Cicirelli, 1995; Katz et al., 1992; Wylie, 2000). Observations of siblings involved in conflict with one another indicate that these incidents are routine, relatively brief, and can help children with problem solving skills (Vespo et al., 1995).

Another term which has been used to describe acceptable levels of opposition between siblings is "sibling rivalry," which has been defined as competition between siblings for the attention, love, recognition, and affection of their parents, as well as struggles over issues of identity (Bryant, 1982; Leung and Robson, 1991; Mander, 1991). Rivalry is frequently considered to be an issue when a newborn is brought into the household, which often results in feelings of jealousy, guilt, rejection, isolation, resentment, and anxiety in the older sibling (Catiglia, 1989; Mander, 1991). In addition, as the children get older, they continue to experience feelings of rivalry due to competition for parental attention, envy over a sibling's accomplishments, frustration over an older child's privileges, and struggle for power and status (Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Klagsbrun, 1992).

Leung and Robson (1991) state that rivalry is found in almost all families and that jealousy of a sibling is a common reaction that is experienced by most children. Furthermore, many siblings feel rivalrous toward their siblings throughout their lives, with these feelings extending into adulthood and old age (Dunn, 1984; Goetting, 1986; Hapworth et al., 1993; Mander, 1991; Stocker et al., 1997). In addition, Mander (1991) writes that unresolved feelings of sibling rivalry will often be reenacted throughout the various spheres of an adult's life, as much of our society is based on competition, which will likely lead to "the original scenario of the family of origin...[being] unconsciously activated" (p. 369).

Although sibling rivalry is considered to be a natural aspect of the sibling relationship which can have several positive effects, such as helping siblings to acquire social, interpersonal, and cognitive skills, sibling rivalry can also escalate into more abusive and damaging behaviours (Leung & Robson, 1991; Rosenthal & Doherty, 1984; Wiehe, 1998). As described by Faber and Mazlish (1987), "the sibling relationship contains enough emotional dynamite to set off rounds of daily explosions" (p. 14). Thus, it is important that parents be aware of the levels of rivalry that exist between their children and ensure that these feelings do not intensify to the point where the children start maltreating one another (Hanoski, 1998; Mander, 1991; Wiehe, 1998).

Definitions of "Aggression," "Violence," and "Physical Abuse"

Each of the terms "aggression," "violence," and "physical abuse" will be used to refer to differing levels of dysfunctional sibling interactions. For the purposes of this study, the term "dysfunctional" will be used to indicate any sibling interaction which involves some form of maltreatment. As stated by Cicerelli (1995) and Kashani and colleagues (1992), maltreatment exists on a continuum, with the negative behaviour progressing from aggression to violence to abuse as the intensity of the interaction increases. All three of these differ from conflict, in that disputes that are aggressive, violent or abusive will be prolonged, they will be accompanied by intense affect, and they will involve coercion that is based on a recognized power differential (Cicirelli, 1995; Fried, 1997; Herzberger, 1996; Katz et al., 1992; Tedeschi, 1997; Vandell & Bailey, 1992; Wiehe, 1998; Wylie, 2000). Furthermore, it is highly likely that acts of aggression, violence and abuse will cause injury to the victim (Straus et al., 1980). Maltreatment between siblings could also be likened to bullying (Martin & Ross, 1995); as described by Wylie (2000), bullying and teasing were "once widely dismissed as an inevitable part of growing up – no worse than chicken pox or skinned knees – [but] are now considered a kind of juvenile terrorism that encompasses a whole range of antisocial acts, including assault, intimidation...ridicule, and ostracism" (p. 29).

Wiehe (1997a) states that there are three types of physically abusive actions. The first of these includes common behaviours, such as hitting, slapping, pushing, hair pulling, punching, scratching, or hitting with objects. The second type involves unusual behaviours, such as excessive tickling. The third type is based on highly injurious or life threatening behaviours, such as seriously beating a sibling or using a weapon. He states that an inherent aspect of these dysfunctional interactions between siblings is that these behaviours are used as a means to gain power or control over the victim. Another component which has been described as being important is the intent, or the perceived intent by the victim, of causing harm (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Fried, 1997; Gelles, 1997; Hanoski, 1998).

Other factors which should be taken into account in differentiating maltreatment from conflict include the constancy and intensity of the behaviours. For example, behaviours which occur frequently, with a great deal of intensity and emotionality on the part of the victim, would be considered to be abusive (Fried, 1997; Whipple & Finton, 1995). The age appropriateness of the behaviour, the purpose of the behaviour, and the reactions of the instigator can also be indications of dysfunctional interactions (Wiehe, 1997b). For example, if behaviours are not age appropriate, are done with malicious intent, and are accompanied by inappropriate reactions, such as laughter, then the behaviour would be considered to be abusive.

Definition of "Emotional Abuse"

As described by Kashani and colleagues (1992), "abusive behaviour may be psychological or attitudinal and hence may be [physically] nonviolent in nature" (p. 182). Caffaro and Conn-Caffaro (1998) and Wiehe (1998) write that "emotional abuse" or psychological maltreatment is often considered to be more potentially destructive than other forms of maltreatment, as a child may internalize these negative messages and come to develop low self-esteem or a distorted self-perception. Emotional abuse usually occurs through verbal means, such as teasing, insulting, ridiculing, threatening, intimidating, or aiming for areas of weakness (Cicirelli, 1995; Klagsbrun, 1992; Whipple & Finton, 1995; Wiehe, 1997b). However, emotional abuse may also occur through the destruction of personal property, exacerbation of a fear, or mistreatment of a pet (Wiehe, 1997b).

A behaviour is considered to be emotionally abusive if it is used with the intent, or the victim's perception of intent, of degrading, humiliating, or demeaning the victim. Although some instigators may disguise these types of behaviours as "joking," Wiehe (1997b) states that this is not the case if it involves a "one-down" relationship and occurs at the expense of the victim (p. 25). Thus, in a similar way to physical maltreatment, emotional maltreatment will involve a power differential between the instigator and victim. As described by Feinberg (1996), siblings are in an optimal position to use teasing to harm one another, as they know each other's "flaws, weakness and vulnerabilities...[and] know exactly what buttons to push to get strong reactions" (p. 204).

The above definitions will be used in the present study to help differentiate between acceptable levels of opposition ("conflict") and unacceptable levels ("maltreatment"). It is important to remember that interactions between siblings exist on a continuum, moving from being constructive to neutral to destructive as they increase in intensity and negativity. In the next section, I describe the previous research in the area of sibling conflict and maltreatment, which have focused on a variety of sibling behaviours existing across this continuum.

Prevalence of Sibling Maltreatment

Sibling maltreatment has been called "pandemic" by Caffaro and Conn-Caffaro (1998, p. 11) who state that despite the high prevalence rate of this form of family violence, it has hardly been researched. Gelles (1997) writes that initial investigations into the phenomenon of sibling maltreatment began in the 1970s. He states that prior to this, information on non-infant, non-fatal sibling violence was practically non-existent. This situation persists today. In contrast to the lack of knowledge on sibling violence, other forms of family violence, such as child and spousal abuse, have become serious social issues of high priority (Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996; Straus et al., 1980). Gelles and Cornell state that so much public and professional attention is being paid to these forms of abuse that many people have developed the misconception that violence towards children or towards one's spouse is the most prevalent and serious type of family violence. As a result, other forms of "hidden" family violence, such as sibling maltreatment, have been neglected (Gelles, 1997).

Investigations into sibling violence began with Steinmetz (1977b), who asked parents to complete diaries on the conflict resolution strategies of their children. Steinmetz (1977b) found that siblings engaged in high levels of physical violence, with the parents reporting that a majority of the children in all age groups used physical violence as a means to resolve their disputes with one another. In a similar study, Straus and colleagues (1980) conducted a large scale national survey on family violence. In this study, parents were asked to describe the sibling violence that occurred with regard to their children. The results indicated that four out of five siblings between the ages of 3 and 17 carried out at least one violent act during a typical year. In this study, the Conflict Tactics Scale was used to identify "violent acts," which referred to such behaviours as slapping, kicking, hitting, pushing, and grabbing. These researchers reported that 53 out of 100 participants attacked their sibling in the last year and that 20% of the participants had been "beaten up" at some point in their lives by a sibling.

Although the above two studies brought the issue of sibling maltreatment into awareness and allowed for further investigation into the area, the findings of these studies are limited by the fact that the participants were parents reporting on the behaviours of their children, which may have led to inaccurate descriptions of what actually happens between siblings. As stated by myself (Hanoski, 1998) and Kahn (1988), parents are likely to be unaware of any sibling maltreatment that may be occurring, as it often happens while the parents are not home and is kept secret by the siblings involved. As stated by one victim of sibling maltreatment, "...I think the conflict really started...when we were by ourselves. We were left alone so much of the time... I never told on [him]. If my eye was kind of black...I'd say I ran into a door" (Hanoski, 1998, p. 93). Furthermore, many parents tend to minimize or ignore conflict between siblings, which may have led them to under-report the true level of violence that was occurring between their children.

In an effort to avoid some of the limitations of using parental reports of sibling maltreatment, several researchers have conducted studies using children, adolescents, and young adults as participants. For example, Steinmetz (1977a) conducted a small, exploratory study with young adults (ages 18 to 30) on the conflict resolution strategies which were used between various family members. Results indicated that 99% of respondents utilized verbal aggression to resolve sibling disputes, while 72% used physical aggression. In another study, Roscoe and colleagues (1987) conducted a study with Grade 7 students, where they found that 88% of boys and 94% of girls claimed that they had been victims of sibling violence in the last year. Prochaska and Prochaska (1985) conducted a similar study with Grade 5 students, who reported an average of 4.7 fights a day with their siblings. In another study, findings indicated that 90% of school-age children experienced "antagonism" with a sibling and 79% of these students stated further that quarrels were an important part of their sibling relationship (Katz, Kramer, & Gottman, 1992). Goodwin and Roscoe (1990) conducted another study in which junior and senior high school students were asked to describe their experiences of being either victims or instigators of sibling violence. Over 60% of the participants in this study reported being either a victim or instigator.

As stated previously, one of the main limitations of these studies is the use of several different terms, such as "violence," "fights," "antagonism," and "quarrels," without any clear definitions for what behaviours were actually being studied. This makes it difficult for the reader to determine whether it is conflict or maltreatment being examined in these studies. Although the lack of appropriate definitions makes it difficult to determine the intensity and negativity of these sibling interactions, it is clear from these studies that siblings argue a great deal with one another and experience a high level of dissension. Another limitation to the above studies is the fact that some children and adolescents who are currently experiencing a violent sibling relationship, by being either a victim or instigator, may be reluctant to admit what is really happening due to a fear of retaliation or punishment. This means that the prevalence rates reported in these studies may actually be higher than indicated by the participants.

Several other researchers have examined the prevalence of sibling maltreatment by recruiting adults as participants and asking them to provide retrospective data with regard to their sibling relationships. These studies are especially helpful as the researchers address the level of sibling maltreatment from both the victims' and the instigators' point of view. For example, Graham-Bermann and colleagues (1994) asked university students to reflect back on their experiences of being either a victim or instigator of sibling violence in childhood or adolescence. The researchers asked participants to compare levels of sibling violence in their family as compared to other families they knew. They found that 20% of the participants reported high levels of victimization with their sibling, as compared to siblings in other families the participants knew, and 17% of participants stated that they treated a sibling more violently than siblings in other families. An obvious limitation to this study is the question of whether participants were capable of making a comparison between themselves and siblings in other families. As abuse is usually kept hidden and private from others, it is not likely that the participants would have been aware of the true extent of sibling conflict or violence that existed in other families. Thus, the results from this study may reflect a lack of knowledge or insight of the participants, rather than true levels of violence.

Wilson and Fromuth (as cited in American Psychological Association, 1997) conducted a study with university students, who were asked to provide retrospective questionnaire data regarding the verbal and physical aggression they had received from or inflicted upon various family members. 65% of these respondents reported that they had experienced very severe physical aggression from a sibling and 60% reported that they had played the role of the instigator of physical aggression. A notable aspect of the findings in this study is the fact that only 21% of the victims of sibling maltreatment used the term physical "abuse" to describe what had transpired between them and their sibling. Thus, despite the fact that they had been kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or choked by their sibling, they did not define this treatment as abusive.

The findings of the studies described above seem to indicate that the prevalence rate of sibling maltreatment is extremely high. As previously stated, researchers have concluded that sibling violence is more prevalent than any other form of family violence (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Goodwin & Roscoe, 1990; Graham-Bermann et al., 1994; Newman, 1994; Reid & Donovan, 1990; Straus et al., 1980; Wiehe, 1998). It is also possible that the prevalence of sibling abuse is actually being underestimated and may be higher than researchers realize, as abusive behaviour between siblings may not be perceived as such by parents or siblings (Hanoski, 1998). More research is necessary in order to determine the seriousness of this type of maltreatment and the effects this treatment has on the development of the victims and instigators.

The Influence of the Sibling Relationship on Development

Generally speaking, siblings are considered to be extremely influential in the social, emotional, and cognitive development of children, as a sibling serves as one's longest familial relationship and "first social laboratory" (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998, p. 95). Eighty percent of children grow up with siblings, who tend to have very strong developmental influences on one another, especially in the areas of personality and psychopathology (Bank, 1992; Cicerelli, 1995; Coles, 1998; Dunn, 1988; Graham-Bermann et al., 1994; Stillwell & Dunn,1985). The sibling relationship provides the context in which social understanding is initially acquired, as it provides an opportunity for learning and modeling new behaviours, as well as learning how to understand the feelings, intentions, and needs of others (Cicirelli, 1994; Dunn, 1984; Garcia, Shaw, Winslow, & Yaggi, 2000; Newman, 1994; Stormshak, Bellanti, & Bierman, 1996). Siblings can play a positive role by teaching children about helping behaviours and cooperation, as well as in providing companionship and support (Bryant, 1982; Cicirelli, 1994; Dunn, 1984; Goetting, 1986; Stormshak et al., 1996). Stormshak and colleagues add that a supportive relationship with one's sibling may serve as a buffering agent against stressful events, leading to higher self-esteem and social competence.

However, sibling relationships can also play a negative role in one's development through destructive and aggressive interactions (Cicirelli, 1995; Garcia et al., 2000; Kashani et al., 1992; Wiehe, 1998). Bank (1992) and Dunn (1988) state that the sibling relationship is one of extraordinary intimacy and power due to the qualities of competitiveness, ambivalence, and emotional understanding that siblings have for one another, which allows children to develop the potential to seriously help or harm one another. Conflicts between siblings have been described as being especially intense and severe, as compared to conflicts with people outside of the family, due to the level of familiarity that exists between siblings, their high accessibility to one another, and parental acceptance of such behaviour (Steinmetz, 1978).

The quality of one's sibling relationship can be extremely influential, having a lifelong impact on siblings' relations with one another, as well as relationships with friends, colleagues, romantic partners, and one's own children (Abramovitch et al., 1982; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Coles, 1998; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994; Wiehe, 1998). These authors state that if one has had a difficult sibling relationship, it is likely that he/she will also experience difficulties with other interpersonal relationships throughout his/her lifetime, whether that be through lack of trust, reluctance to become close to others, repetition of dysfunctional behaviour patterns, or transference of anger and aggression. In a study conducted by Sandmaier (1994), participants reported "that 'sibling footprints' could be felt in one or more critical realms of their adult lives: the choice of an intimate partner, expectations for friendship, a career path followed or bypassed, a readiness to take risks" (p. 46). Klagsbrun (1992) states that this is related to multigenerational transmission, which is described as a process whereby an individual learns behaviour patterns within his/her family of origin, which are then repeated and passed on to the next generation. She describes this as "ghosts [from the past]...who steal in unnoticed and make their presence felt" throughout the various spheres of the adult's life (p. 346).

The Strength of the Sibling Bond

One of the reasons that a sibling relationship can be so influential is due to the strength of the sibling bond, which is likely to be the longest bond that a person will experience in his/her lifetime (Cicirelli, 1994; Goetting, 1986; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994). This is particularly the case for younger siblings, who know no other life than one in which their sibling is present (Klagsbrun, 1992). The strength of this bond has been attributed to several factors, such as blood ties, family resemblances, and shared experiences (Cicirelli, 1994; Goetting, 1986; Sandmaier, 1994). A sibling is often the only person who shares the same experiences and memories from the vantage point of being a child, and who intimately knows "the child" within; thus, only a brother or sister will know "your once-painful shyness, your bravery, your capacity for nerdiness, your weird brand of humour, what thrills you, what makes you want to cry" (Sandmaier, 1994, p. 11). Cicirelli (1994) has linked the strength of a sibling relationship to attachment theory, stating that once a child has an emotional bond with a sibling, he/she takes on a protective role in order to prevent the loss of the attachment figure.

Other authors have stated that the sibling bond seems to go beyond these factors, reflecting something inexplicable and intangible (Ross & Milgram, 1982). For example, in a study conducted by Ross and Milgram, participants described "an invisible space that enveloped siblings, a space that protected but also confined" (p. 231). Part of this may be due to the intimate knowledge siblings have about one another, which has been described as a "naked understanding...of the very essence of the other's being" (Klagsbrun, 1992, p. 7). The relationship that one has with a sibling is a very ambivalent one, with love and hate often being "seen as the two sides of the sibling coin" (Bryant, 1982, p. 95). Thus, despite the fact that the sibling relationship is usually the most conflicted and strained relationship of any human relationship, siblings still tend to experience tremendous feelings of loyalty and connection to one another (Bank & Kahn, 1982a; Bryant, 1982; Dunn, 1996; Faber & Mazlish, 1987). Sandmaier (1994) writes that even within a highly negative sibling relationship, some form of connection is often established, which does not severe easily. As described by Faber and Mazlish (1987), one could easily be

> ...awed at the power of the sibling dynamic to cause such pain between brothers and sisters, from earliest childhood on; awed at the almost magnetic pull between siblings to reconnect to reestablish their "siblingship"; awed at the drive that pushes siblings, however wounded, back together to try to heal themselves and each other (p. 206/7).

As stated by Bank (1988), a child has a "birthright" to a fulfilling sibling relationship, and will suffer if something so precious, warm and natural "fails to flower" (p. 345). As described by Freeman (1993), "...siblings continue to influence one another even when they are not physically together and even when they have had little or no communication," (p. 326). Thus, it appears that siblings can have a great deal of developmental influence, in both positive and negative ways, and that these influences may have a powerful life-long impact.

Effects of Sibling Conflict and Maltreatment

Positive Effects of Sibling Conflict and Maltreatment

Many parents and others in society believe that conflict between siblings is not serious or detrimental, and can result in positive developmental outcomes and benefits (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998). For example, in a study conducted by Prochaska and Prochaska (1985), findings indicated that even though conflict behaviours between siblings occurred at a high level, prosocial behaviours occurred more often than conflict behaviours. These researchers concluded that the high level of positive behaviours alleviated any damaging effects of the negative behaviours. Furthermore, sibling conflict has been described as being a necessary aspect of the sibling relationship, as it serves as a means for children to differentiate from each other (Vandell & Bailey, 1992). In fact, these authors go so far as to say that a sibling relationship without any conflict would lead to more developmental problems than a relationship with conflict, as the siblings would grow up to have a restricted relationship where they would be too attached to one another.

Other possible positive aspects of sibling conflict include the expression of painful and hostile feelings, the development of coping skills, the establishment of social rules in the family, the learning of problem-solving and negotiation strategies, and the development of a stronger sibling bond (Bennet, 1990; Bryant, 1982; Cicirelli, 1995; Dunn, 1984; Freeman, 1993; Herzberger, 1996; Herzberger & Hall, 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992). Faber and Mazlish (1987) write that through their negative interactions siblings may learn resiliency, assertiveness, and persistence in developing their own talents and abilities. Conflict between siblings can also be seen as a way for children to learn how to handle conflict with friends and schoolmates by helping them to learn skills of argument and how to take another person's point of view (Bank & Kahn, 1982b; Dunn, 1984; Dunn, 1996; Stormshak et al., 1996; Straus et al., 1980).

Findings from qualitative studies also indicate positive effects of sibling maltreatment, such as teaching participants to listen to their own children about their sibling disputes, by leading participants into helping professions where they work with family violence, by helping participants to become more independent and resilient, and by helping them to develop a sense of humor and quick wit in order to deal with the verbal abuse they experienced from their siblings (Hanoski, 1998; Wiehe, 1997b). In a study conducted by Kramer and Baron (1995), findings indicated that mothers who reported having negative interactions with their siblings were the most likely to have children with positive sibling relationships. These authors attribute this finding to the participants' desire to find ways to avoid the difficulties they experienced as children by using redirection techniques during sibling disputes, being aware of the negative effects of sibling maltreatment, being less authoritarian with their discipline strategies, and avoiding differential treatment. Victims also seem to feel that although the experience of sibling maltreatment was difficult for them, it shaped who they are in the present. For example, as stated by one of the victims: "...would I change anything? I don't know...I think it's one of the things that have made me stronger. So I don't know if I would change anything..." (Hanoski, 1998, p.109).

Negative Effects of Sibling Conflict and Maltreatment

Although the positive effects described above are a possible outcome of sibling conflict, there are also many damaging outcomes that have been described as resulting from sibling disputes (Hanoski, 1998). These negative outcomes are more likely to occur when sibling conflicts escalate into more abusive and violent interactions. Caffaro and Conn-Caffaro (1998) write that "consistent disregard for a sibling's personal and psychological space" is often indicative of a more damaging sibling relationship (p. 95). As described by several authors, although conflict and disputes between siblings may be inevitable, the use of physical force or violence in resolving these conflicts is unnecessary, and can be seriously harmful (Cicirelli, 1995; Martin & Ross, 1995; Straus et al., 1980; Wiehe, 1998).

Previous research has indicated that negative outcomes can arise for both the instigators and victims of sibling maltreatment. For example, instigators have been described as experiencing peer rejection, delinquency, and maintenance of aggression into adulthood (Dunn, 1988; Dunn, 1996; Finkelhor & Dzuiba-Leatherman, 1994; Fried, 1997; Stromshak et al., 1996; Volling & Belsky, 1992; Wylie, 2000), while victims may experience physical injury, demoralization, poor self-esteem, anxiety, and depression (Anonymous, 1978; Bennett, 1990; Cicirelli, 1995; Dunn, 1996; Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Finkelhor & Dzuiba-Leatherman, 1994; Fried, 1997; Graham-Bermann et al., 1994; Hanoski, 1998; Klagsbrun, 1992; Perry, Perry, & Kennedy, 1992; Wiehe, 1997b; Wylie, 2000). Fried (1997) and Wylie (2000) add that in extreme cases, a child who has been victimized for many years may attempt suicide due to feelings of depression and hopelessness.

One of the most serious ramifications of a dysfunctional sibling relationship is that violent acts in childhood often shape aggressive behaviour, which may lead both victim and instigator to rely on violent means to resolve conflict in their future interpersonal relationships (Dunn, 1984; Dunn, 1996; Finkelhor & Dzuiba-Leatherman, 1994; Fried, 1997; Gully, Dengerink, Pepping, & Bergstrom, 1981; Loeber, Weissman, &

Reid, 1983; Martin & Ross, 1995; Perry et al., 1992; Steinmetz, 1978; Widom, 1998). For example, in one study, Martin and Ross (1995) report that the only factor that predicted future sibling aggression for their participants was prior aggressive behaviour. In addition, the violence displayed by one sibling was found to be correlated to the later violent behaviour of his/her brother or sister, indicating that a pattern of aggression tends to develop between siblings. In another study, researchers found that male college students who admitted to being violent toward a sibling were also found to be more violent toward people outside the family (Mangold & Koski, 1990). In an earlier study (Hanoski, 1998), I also discovered a similar situation with one of my participants, who stated: "...he has had girlfriends...and...he picks on these women and he picks on them. He's constantly picking on them. He laughs at that, but it's a lot of the same [treatment I had from him]," (p. 135).

One explanation for the above findings may be due to the "foot-in-the-door" phenomenon, which has been used to describe the process whereby people become involved in the performance of altruistic behaviours (Herzberger, 1996). According to this theory, once a person has agreed to engage in a small act of kindness, he/she is more likely to engage in a more demanding act of kindness. When related to violent behaviour, this theory indicates that a person who engages in a minor act of violence is more likely to engage in more serious acts of violence. Another possible explanation for the shaping of aggressive behaviour is the Cyclical Hypothesis of Abuse, which means that when violent behaviour occurs frequently within a household (whether performed by parents or siblings) violent norms are established, which are then accepted by the family members and perpetuated in future generations (Herzberger, 1996; Truscott, 1989; Widom, 1989c). According to this theory, a child who is brought up in an abusive environment may come to accept violence as a reasonable way to resolve conflict and may then carry the abusive behaviour into his/her own family and relationships. Although this theory sounds credible, research findings have been inconclusive, with a range of 18 to 70% (depending on the type of methodology used) of abused children becoming abusive in later relationships (Herzberger, 1996; Widom, 1989c).

In an attempt to overcome these methodological difficulties, Widom (1989b, 1989c, 1996, 1998) and Weeks and Widom (1998) have conducted several studies on childhood victimization in order to explore whether the cycle of violence holds true; while her research is based on children who have been abused by their parents, it seems logical that the same results may occur for children who are abused by a sibling. Findings from these studies indicate that children who have experienced abuse or neglect are at a much higher risk of becoming involved in adult criminal behaviour (both violent and nonviolent) than matched controls. However, despite the fact that twice as many abused or neglected children were arrested for criminal offenses, Widom (1998) writes that the relationship between childhood abuse and adult criminality is far from inevitable, as there are many victimized individuals who do not engage in criminal acts. According to Truscott (1989), who studied the intergenerational transmission of violence for adolescent males, the relationship between parental abuse and violent behaviour in adolescence is far from straightforward; he found that adolescents tended to become aggressive if they had been abused by their father, but not by their mother, and that their violent behaviour was also related to several other factors, such as the use of externalizing defenses and psychotic personality traits. Thus, while childhood vicitimization seems to increase one's risk of becoming violent, the cycle of violence is far from inevitable, which provides some hope that with appropriate intervention, the transmission of violence can be circumvented (Widom, 1998).

Various researchers note that the impact of a dysfunctional sibling relationship often creates a lasting emotional impression and can have profound, often longlasting, negative effects on the victim (Bank & Kahn, 1982; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Hanoski, 1998; Graham-Bermann & Cutler, 1994; Martin & Ross, 1995; Stocker et al., 1997). Wiehe (1997b) states that many victims' lives are "scarred" and that these individuals may need extensive counselling in order to deal with some of these negative ramifications (p. 2). Other studies have described various negative effects as well, including depression, anxiety, a lower adaptability to stress, difficulties with other interpersonal relationships, fear and a lack of trust in others, drug or alcohol problems, repeating the victim role in other relationships, superficial adult sibling relationships, lack of assertiveness, and low self-esteem (Anonymous, 1978; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Hanoski, 1998; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994; Widom, 1998; Wiehe, 1997b). As stated by one victim: "I became a doormat in my other relationships with men. It made me very timid and shy and left me with no self-esteem," (Wiehe, 1997b, p. 19). Perez and Widom (1994) also write that children who have been abused or neglected may suffer from deficits in intellectual ability, academic performance, and reading level.

Bank and colleagues (1996) write that sibling maltreatment may be highly predictive of later adjustment problems for the instigators, such as feelings of inadequacy, incompetence, and hostility. In addition, negative interactions with a sibling may influence an aggressive child to use antisocial behaviour and coercion into adulthood, which can lead to juvenile and adult criminal offenses (Truscott, 1989). Furthermore, instigators of sibling maltreatment may develop a "firmly entrenched disregard for those they can victimize" (Bank et al., 1996, p. 221), leading to further maltreatment in interpersonal relationships. Freeman (1993) writes that other negative ramifications for the instigators may include: anger management problems, career indecision, difficulties with interpersonal relationships, and being insensitive and unemotional.

Emotional abuse or psychological maltreatment by a sibling can also result in deleterious effects for the siblings involved, even when not accompanied by physical maltreatment. Wilson and Fromuth (1997) conducted a study on verbal and physical aggression in the family and reported that a majority of their participants stated that emotional or verbal abuse had more negative effects than physical violence (as cited in Elias, 1997). Participants were also more likely to label emotional maltreatment as "emotional abuse" whereas severe forms of physical violence were not labeled as "physical abuse." Thus, from this study, it seems that the participants believed that emotional maltreatment had more of a negative impact than physical maltreatment.

Despite the fact that emotional maltreatment has been described as being more detrimental to a child's development than physical maltreatment, it tends to be even more minimized or ignored than physical altercations (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Wiehe, 1997b). This may be due to the fact that it is less visible than physical forms and leaves no physical signs, thus causing parents to believe that children are really not "hurting" each other when they use verbal methods of maltreatment (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998, p. 102). Wiehe (1997b) writes that parental acceptance of hurtful teasing and insults can be extremely detrimental to a child, as the victim receives the message that this hurtful behaviour is not really abusive, and eventually comes to deny the fact that he/she is being seriously hurt by a sibling. Thus, a child may be suffering from ridicule and degradation, while the parents, who are the only source of help available to him/her, ignore or minimize the abuse. This can lead to serious developmental difficulties, such as the development of learned helplessness (Bennett, 1990; Herzberger, 1996).

Mazur (1998) states that research on both animals and people shows that repeated exposure to negative events which are unpredictable and out of the individual's control can have long term ramifications. In these situations, both animals and people begin to believe that their actions have no effect on their situation, and as a consequence, stop making any attempt to escape from their circumstances. This creates a feeling of helplessness, which can then be carried over into other areas of a person's life. The concept of learned helplessness was first applied to situations of spousal abuse by Walker (1979), who described the situation as one in which the victim is often isolated and needs to find his/her own methods of escape. Any efforts to leave the relationship are often ineffective, which results in feelings of powerlessness. The victim eventually comes to a place where he/she cannot imagine a way to leave the situation and resigns him/herself to a life of abuse. Bennett (1990) has written that this phenomenon is even more likely to develop in children, who do not have the choice or the means to leave the situation. Thus, without parental intervention, the child may come to believe that he/she is powerless in the situation and that there is no way to escape the abuse (Bennett, 1990; Finkelhor & Dzuiba-Leatherman, 1994; Gelles, et al., 1985; Herzberger, 1996). As described by one victim of sibling abuse:

> Since my mother refused to acknowledge the seriousness of my situation, I felt unprotected, misunderstood and betrayed [and]... learned that my mother was not a reliable resource of protection for me....The bruises healed, but my mother's betrayal left permanent scars... (Anonymous, 1978, p. 203/4).

Many of the negative effects of sibling maltreatment that have previously been discussed can be attributed to the development of learned helplessness. For example, learned helplessness has been linked to depression, anxiety, and poor interpersonal relationships, as well as the inability to find effective solutions to problems, the tendency to give up easily when searching for a solution, lethargy, despair, and hopelessness (Bennett, 1990; Gelles, et al., 1985; Herzberger, 1996; Wylie, 2000). As described by one victim:

> I would try to run away...but not... hit back because...there just wouldn't have been any way for me to hit back. Run, yeah. [When he would hit me, I felt] terrified and really helpless. Really, really helpless. I used to vow that when I became an adult I would never, ever again fear anyone... (Hanoski, 1998, p. 96).

Another aspect of emotional maltreatment which can be extremely detrimental to the victims is the fact that those who experience perpetual verbal assaults tend to internalize these negative messages and come to develop a distorted self-image which can bring about a self-fulfilling prophecy, as well as feelings of despair and low self-esteem (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Herzberger, 1996; Wiehe, 1997b). As described by Wiehe (1997b), some victims of sibling maltreatment internalize these messages to such a degree that they come to develop "a pervasive feeling...that they should not exist," (p. 49). Caffaro and Conn-Caffaro (1998) state that these messages not only distort the view of the self, but of others, the environment, and the future.

Several other negative effects have been found to occur as a result of emotional maltreatment, such as dysfunctional social relationships, acting out behaviours, somatic symptoms, nightmares, and phobias (Garbarino, 1987 and Germain, Brassard, & Hart, 1985 as cited in Whipple & Finton, 1995). Some of the negative effects of emotional maltreatment are similar to those which occur as a result of physical maltreatment, such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, poor interpersonal relationships, and feelings of worthlessness (Whipple & Finton, 1995). Furthermore, Wiehe (1997b) has reported that emotional maltreatment often accompanies physical abuse. For example, in one study, 78% of respondents reported that they had been emotionally abused by a sibling (Wiehe, 1997b). The participants in this study reported further that the emotional abuse was a fundamental aspect of all other forms of sibling abuse that they had experienced. For example, one victim stated: "It's impossible to separate out the physical and emotional abuse for me. In particular, it was emotionally abusive to be waiting for the physical abuse to start again," (Wiehe, 1997b, p. 35). Furthermore, Caffaro and Conn-Caffaro (1998) write that physical violence may grow from emotional maltreatment if not dealt with appropriately.

Thus, it appears that there are many different possible effects of sibling conflict and maltreatment. It seems that conflict between siblings can result in positive developmental outcomes, whereas maltreatment can result in extremely damaging consequences. Due to the varying levels of negativity in the interactions that can occur between siblings, as well as the negative ramifications that can result from dysfunctional sibling interactions, it is very important that these terms be defined appropriately. It is also important to gain an understanding of the factors which can contribute to an escalation of violence in order to understand the line that is being crossed between conflict and maltreatment. Some of these contributing factors are discussed in the next section.

Causes and Contributing Factors to Sibling Maltreatment

According to Cicerelli (1995), there are several factors which can contribute to the development of maladaptive interactions between siblings, such as the characteristics of the sibling relationship, temperament of the siblings, characteristics of the parents, parenting strategies, and the emotional climate of the family. In the next section, I describe the research which has been conducted in an effort to examine the influence of these various factors.

Characteristics of the Sibling Relationship

Much of the previous research in the area of sibling maltreatment has been concerned with various characteristics of the sibling relationship, such as gender, age, and the age gap between siblings. With regard to research on gender, findings have been inconclusive. In a large-scale national survey conducted by Straus and colleagues (1980), girls were found to be more verbal and less physically violent than boys, although these differences were very slight. These researchers also reported the finding that the presence of male siblings tended to make the sibling relationship more violent. For example, boys with sisters were found to be less violent than boys with brothers, and girls with brothers were found to be more violent than girls with sisters.

Similar results have been obtained in other studies, which indicate that the most violent sibling relationships are those with all boys, followed by older brother/younger sister dyads (Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996; Vandell & Bailey, 1992; Wiehe, 1997b). In another study conducted by Mangold and Koski (1990), boys were more likely than girls to be violent towards a brother, but not towards a sister. However, in contrast to these studies, others have found that there have been no significant differences with regard to gender (Abramovitch, Pepler, & Corter, 1986; Felson, 1983; Goodwin & Roscoe, 1990; Roscoe et al., 1987) or that the most violent sibling pairings are those with a brother and sister (Klagsbrun, 1992). Caffaro and Conn-Caffaro (1998) and Klagsbrun (1992) write that while boys have been found to be more physically aggressive, girls seem to display equal levels of aggression, but do so in a verbal or psychological manner. Thus, no definite conclusions regarding the influence of gender on sibling maltreatment can be drawn at the present time.

Researchers have found that age seems to have an influence on the quality of sibling relationships, with the level of violence decreasing as siblings get older (Cicirelli, 1995; Dunn & Munn, 1986; Fruman & Buhrmester, 1985; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Goodwin & Roscoe, 1990; Herzberger & Hall, 1993; Martin & Ross, 1995; Prochaska & Prochaska, 1985). In one study, Steinmetz (1977) found that children under the age of eight were considered to be the most violent, which she explained by stating that children who are younger have less impulse control. In a study conducted by Martin and Ross (1995), findings indicated that the relative age of siblings was more influential than their actual age, as older siblings displayed more aggression than their siblings did when they reached the same age at a later time period. These authors suggested that the important factor in sibling aggression was the power associated with being an elder sibling, as well as fears of retaliation on the part of the younger sibling, rather than the specific age level of the siblings.

There are other authors who state that although the level of violent physical interactions decreases as children grow older, they still occur at a high level, and are often resolved in an inappropriate manner which can be psychologically damaging for the children involved (Straus et al., 1980; Vandell & Bailey, 1992). Furthermore, these altercations are occurring with siblings who have grown strong enough to cause serious physical damage to one another (Goodwin & Roscoe, 1990). One explanation that has been offered for this decline in the level of violence between siblings is the simple fact that siblings spend less time together as they grow older (Gelles, 1997). Another possibility is the idea that verbal and cognitive abilities improve as children grow older, which may allow them to replace physical confrontation with verbal methods of interacting (Abramovitch et al., 1982; Faber & Mazlish, 1987). According to this theory, siblings may simply replace physical maltreatment with verbal maltreatment as they age.

Researchers have also examined the influence of the age gap between siblings and have found that maltreatment seems to occur more frequently between siblings who are closer in age than between those who were born farther apart (Cicirelli, 1995; Dunn & Munn, 1986; Fruman & Buhrmester, 1985; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Goodwin & Roscoe, 1990; Herzberger & Hall, 1993; Prochaska & Prochaska, 1985). In fact, in one study, participants who had an age gap of six years or more experienced virtually no incidents of violence with one another (Vandell & Bailey, 1992). These researchers also found the highest levels of conflict occurred between siblings with an age gap of two to four years, which they attributed to higher levels of competition and rivalry. Despite these findings, other researchers have found no significant effects of age gap on sibling conflict (Abramovitich et al., 1982; Dunn & Munn, 1986; Furman & Buhrmeister, 1985; Stoneman, Brody, & McKinnon, 1984).

Temperament of the Siblings

Other factors which may be related to the occurrence of sibling maltreatment are the temperament and personality characteristics of the siblings involved. One aspect of temperament which has been examined in previous research is activity level; for example, Brody and Stoneman (1987) suggest that an aggressive sibling relationship is more likely to occur when one of the siblings is highly active or impulsive, with the risk increasing if both siblings are highly active or impulsive. This hypothesis was examined by Mash and Johnston (1983), who found that highly active and impulsive children engaged in roughly four times the amount of negative behaviour as less active and impulsive children from the control group. These researchers also found that when being supervised by their mothers, the active/impulsive children engaged in approximately twice as much negative behaviour as controls.

When considering the temperament of the victims, Wiehe (1997b) proposed a theory called the Interactional Theory which states that the way some children interact with others may make them more prone to being victimized. For example, they may have certain personality characteristics or perform behaviours which may provoke an abusive response. Wiehe explains that this theory is not intended to blame the victim, but instead explores the contribution of both siblings in an effort to find a solution to the problem. A victim of sibling maltreatment may also begin to fight back with the instigator in an effort to defend him/herself or react by screaming and crying, which may lead the instigator to abuse the victim further (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Wiehe, 1998). As described by Fried (1997), victims may be of two types: provocative or passive. Provocative victims are those who irritate and tease others, and tend to fight back when assaulted. In contrast, passive victims tend to be anxious and insecure, and do not appear to do anything to provoke attack from others, nor do they make any attempt to defend themselves or retaliate when victimized.

With regard to the temperament of the instigators, Caffaro and Conn-Caffaro (1998) list a number of personality characteristics which may contribute to sibling maltreatment, such as utilizing thinking errors which distort or minimize the severity of the violent behaviour, having a need for power or control, being victimized him/herself, lacking impulse control, having developmental deficits, being emotionally immature, and lacking adequate social skills. The instigator may also have difficulty in feeling empathy for the victim, and may not be able to imagine how his/her behaviour is affecting his/her brother or sister (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Wiehe, 1997a). According to Fried (1997), there are primarily two types of instigators: reactive and proactive. Reactive bullies are those who are very emotional, have poor impulse control, and interpret others' actions as being malicious, which leads him/her to feel justified in reacting aggressively to the threats and hostility he/she perceives from others. The proactive bully is one who engages in aggressive actions in an unemotional, controlled, and intentional manner, often with the aim to manipulate or gain power over others.

Tedeschi (1997) writes that instigators may be motivated to engage in aggressive acts by a desire to appear strong and fearless, to seek excitement or relieve boredom, or out of a lack of respect for authority and the desire to appear independent from parental rule. He states further that many aggressive acts are carried out in order to fulfill one of three goals: to control the behaviour of others, to maintain or restore social justice, or to assert and protect oneself. In addition, many instigators avoid taking responsibility for their actions by adopting the belief that they had been provoked by the victim; even in cases where the instigator does admit his/her responsibility in the violent interaction, he or she often describes the event as less harmful and detrimental than the victim describes it to have been (Tedeschi, 1997).

Aggressive children may also have other characteristics, such as low self-esteem, a weak self image, irritability, or insecurity, which may cause them to act out (Kingston & Prior, 1995; Train, 1993). Other researchers have described aggressive children as having an aggressive instinct which is part of their genetic make up and acts as an uncontrollable impulse (Kashani et al., 1992; Train, 1993). Tedeschi (1997) and Snyder and Schrepferman (1997) state that youth who experience intense negative affect or are quick to anger may also engage in more violent acts, as intense feelings of anger often disrupt one's cognitive abilities, leading to limited information processing, either/or thinking, less weighing of alternatives, and a lack of attention being paid to the potential costs of behaving aggressively.

Brain damage and neuropathology, in the form of neurochemical imbalance, trace mineral imbalances, low IQ, and untreated hyperactivity or attention deficit disorder, may play a role as well (Fraser, 1996; Kratcoski, 1984; Withecomb; 1997). According to Withecomb, children with lower cognitive abilities often engage in more violent behaviour, which may be due to an inability to accurately interpret environmental cues, a lack of appropriate coping skills, or a failure to learn from one's past experiences. Withecomb adds that in a minority of cases, the violence exhibited by children may be related to a serious psychiatric disorder, such as major depression, conduct disorder, substance abuse, or schizophrenia. Thus, it appears that there are many factors which can contribute to the development of aggression in a child, with no easy or straightforward explanations.

Despite the many factors that may be involved, Kingston and Prior (1995) state that aggressive tendencies often shows themselves as early as 2 to 3 years of age through a "difficult" temperament, as displayed through noncompliance and aggression. Furthermore, aggressive behaviour in young children is highly stable, and is often predictive of later hostility toward a sibling, as well as delinquency, academic difficulties, drug and alcohol use, and reckless driving, which implies that intervention strategies need to be implemented at an early age in order to circumvent future problems (Fraser, 1996; Kingston & Prior, 1995; Rubin, Chen & Hymel, 1993; Studer, 1996; Withecomb, 1997). In a study conducted by Martin and Ross (1995) findings indicated that parental intervention at 2 years of age was often successful in curbing aggressive sibling behaviour; however, at later ages parental response did not seem to have any effect on a child's level of aggression. Thus, it is extremely important that parents be observant of the behaviours and temperaments of their children, and intervene early on in the child's life, in order to avoid later difficulties (Widom, 1998; Wiehe, 1998).

The Parents' Role in Sibling Maltreatment

Although the various characteristics of the siblings play a role in sibling maltreatment, often these difficulties can be alleviated if the child is given the appropriate parental acceptance and attention (Bank, 1988; Brody & Stoneman, 1996; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Train, 1993). However, the opposite of this is also true; siblings who are brought up in a family environment in which parents are unavailable or uninvolved may be negatively affected and may be at risk for sibling maltreatment (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; MacKinnon-Lewis, Starnes, Volling, & Johnson, 1997). Thus, as stated by Brody and Stoneman (1996), the result of a difficult or aggressive temperament is not fixed; it depends on the context and quality of the parent/child relationship. Klagsbrun (1992) adds that despite the fact that many siblings are reluctant to blame their parents for their difficulties with a sibling, there are many "poisonous parental behaviors" which serve as the "ancient sources of [sibling] problems" (p. 367).

One of the most detrimental ways parents can negatively impact their children is by modeling violent behaviour in the home, through corporal punishment, high levels of marital conflict, or spousal abuse (Brody & Stoneman, 1994; Cicirelli, 1995; Freeman, 1993; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Graham-Bermann et al., 1994; Herzberger, 1996; Jorgenson, 1986; Kashani et al., 1992; Katz et al., 1992; Severe, 2000; Steinmetz, 1977a; Train, 1993; Wiehe, 1998; Withecomb, 1997). As described by Patterson (1986, as cited in Cicirelli, 1994), "deviant behavior [is often] 'trained' and practiced within the family environment" (p. 49). It has also been found that children who are involved in sibling maltreatment are often also victims of abuse or neglect from a parent (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Coles, 1998; Green, 1984; Kratcoski, 1985; Rosenthal & Doherty, 1984). As described by one victim: "...there was a lot of physical abuse going on in that family. It was my parents as well. I don't know if beating the hell out of somebody is abuse because when I was brought up, that was normal," (Hanoski, 1998, p. 79). In cases of parental neglect and rejection, children may begin to act out aggressively out of a sense of competition for the limited availability of affection from the parents (Garcia et al., 2000). Alternatively, children may imitate their parents and begin to neglect or ignore their siblings; however, in many cases, the ignored child often badgers the other for attention, which may then lead to an aggressive act due to feelings of annoyance or irritation (Crittenden, 1984).

The theory which has been used to explain the phenomenon of children modeling their parents' aggressive behaviour has been referred to as the Cycle of Violence, or the belief that "violence begets violence" (Straus et al., 1980, p. 102; Widom, 1989). This theory states that children will imitate their parents' behaviour, as they come to believe that violence is an acceptable way to deal with conflict

(Crittenden, 1984; Fraser, 1996; Green, 1984; Herzberger, 1996; Jorgenson, 1986; Kratcoski, 1985; MacKinnon-Lewis et al., 1997; Patterson, Dishion, & Bank, 1984; Severe, 2000; Steinmetz, 1977a; Straus et al., 1980). In addition, a lack of empathy may contribute to the Cycle of Violence, as parents who display little compassion in their interactions with one another or with their children may inadvertently teach their children to adopt these attitudes and behaviours in their own interactions (Wiehe, 1997a).

Social learning theory has been used to explain the Cycle of Violence, stating that the child observes and imitates the use of violence that is used by parents to handle conflict (Herzberger, 1996; Klagsbrun, 1992; Kratcoski, 1985; Steinmetz, 1977a; Tedeschi, 1997). Learning to use violent means to resolve disputes may also occur through operant conditioning, where the use of violence leads to the desired results for the instigator, which reinforces these methods of handling conflict and increases the likelihood that maltreatment will be used again in the future (Herzberger, 1996; Snyder & Schrepferman, 1997; Wylie, 2000). Furthermore, parents may unwittingly reinforce coercive or aggressive behaviour that is displayed by their children by giving in when their children tantrum, yell, whine, or hit (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Fraser, 1996).

Parents can also contribute to negative sibling interactions by engaging in ineffective parenting strategies, such as poor or harsh discipline, lack of supervision, inconsistent intervention, and disorganization in the family (Bank, 1988; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Dunn, 1984; Fraser, 1996; Frude, 1993; Kingston & Prior, 1995; Martin & Ross, 1995; Patterson et al., 1984; Studer, 1996; Tedeschi, 1997; Wiehe, 1998; Withecomb, 1997). In a study conducted by Crittenden (1984), children as young as 2 years of age were displaying some of the prominent aspects of their parents' style of childrearing; thus, it is essential that parents use appropriate discipline strategies and coach their children towards functional ways of interacting with others. Parents may not establish clear guidelines or models for working together or handling disagreements, which can contribute to the siblings' use of violence in handling their disputes (Brody & Stoneman, 1987; Reid & Donovan, 1990; Train, 1993). When sibling maltreatment does occur, parents often do not respond appropriately and may ignore or minimize the negative interactions, blame the victim, join in on the victimization with the instigator (for example, by teasing or belittling), or respond with disbelief or indifference (Wiehe, 1997b). Wiehe (1997b) and Martin and Ross (1995) also state that parents may make attempts to intervene when sibling maltreatment occurs, but will use methods which are ineffective, such as merely giving verbal directives to stop or using corporal punishment.

Differential treatment of one's children can be extremely detrimental to the sibling relationship, as favouritism breeds competition, and the children may become increasingly resentful and violent towards one another (Brody, Copeland, Sutton, Richardson, & Guyer, 1998; Brody & Stoneman, 1994; Brody & Stoneman, 1996; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Cicirelli, 1994; Dunn, 1988; Green, 1984; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Reid & Donovan, 1990; Ross & Milgram, 1982; Sandmaier, 1994; Vandell & Bailey, 1992; Volling & Elins, 1998). As previously stated, rivalry is fairly common between siblings, but can result in disastrous outcomes if allowed to escalate to a destructive or abusive level. In a study conducted by Klagsbrun (1992), findings indicated that "in the most extreme cases, favouritism had created so much acrimony that it had destroyed all relationship among siblings" (p. 158) due to ongoing feelings of competition, jealousy, and anger that lasted long into adulthood.

Bank (1988) states that extreme parental favouritism can lead to serious sibling maltreatment, as well as depression and behaviour problems, as the disfavoured child may turn his/her feelings of rejection and anger towards his/her sibling. As described by some victims, such rivalry and competition seems to lie at the root of most of their sibling difficulties: "I think a lot of it had to do with...my dad liked me and she couldn't handle that. My dad really liked me. I've always been my dad's favourite," (Hanoski, 1998, p. 120). Bryant (1982) adds that negativity and maltreatment is often displayed by both sides of a differentially treated sibling pair, with some preferred siblings adopting an attitude of disdain for a sibling that they believe is valued less than themselves. In addition, the favoured sibling may resent the burden of expectation that the parents have placed on him/her, which can result in feelings of guilt, resentment, and an unhealthy need for approval (Klagsburn, 1992).

Volling and Eline (1998) and Brody and colleagues (1998) write that differential treatment may also occur with regard to the disfavouring of a particular sibling, with the parents consistently blaming, criticizing, or punishing one child over the other. This can lead to feelings of resentment and anger for the child who perceives him or herself as constantly being singled out as the "bad" child, as well as feelings of superiority and rejection on the part of the child who observes the other being punished (Brody et al., 1998; Bryant, 1992; Kalgsbrun, 1992). Klagsbrun and Brody and colleagues refer to this kind of parental behaviour as "scapegoating" and state that singling out one child in a negative fashion can have long-term negative effects for both siblings, such as the severing of sibling ties, low self-esteem, unhealthy needs for recognition and approval, and feelings of fear, shame, or helplessness. There may be several reasons for parents to single out one child in this way, such as gender biases, disappointment in a child's lack of ability or talent in a certain area, or personality differences (Klagsbrun, 1992). Klagsbrun and Brody and colleagues also relate scapegoating to family systems theory, where it is believed that the difficulties that are blamed on the child are really reflective of larger problems within the family; in some cases, the child plays the role of the "bad child" in order to deflect the family's attention from some of the other difficulties they are experiencing.

Due to the negative ramifications of differential treatment, it is very important that parents ensure that they encourage the uniqueness of each of their children, while at the same time treating all of their children with basic equality (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Hapworth et al., 1993; Sandmaier, 1994). It is important to note that "basic equality" does not necessarily mean that each child is treated and loved exactly

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the same; Faber and Mazlish (1987) write that the tactic that seems to have the most impact on children is the knowledge that they are loved "uniquely – for [their] own special self", with their own individualized needs in mind (p. 89). Thus, being fair is related more to meeting each child's needs, rather than treating each child the same. Klagsburn (1992) adds that parents need to try to show their love and attention in a balanced way over the years, so that all the children feel equally appreciated and valued over time. Another way in which parents can avoid the negative effects of differential treatment is to refrain from making any sort of comparisons between siblings, even those which are favourable, as comments implying that one child is somehow better than the other can lead to feelings of superiority or contempt for the less-favoured sibling (Faber & Mazlish, 1987).

It is important for parents to realize that differential treatment may be appropriate at some stages of development, such as with a newborn, who may require more time and attention as well as extremely different discipline strategies (Volling & Elin, 1998). In order to curb the effects of the parents' differential treatment of a new baby, parents need to ensure that they spend some one-on-one time with the older child and ensure that his/her needs are being addressed (Faber & Mazlish, 1987). In addition, as the children get older, parents need to monitor their behaviour and make adjustments so that their time and attention, as well as their discipline strategies, correspond with changes in their children's stage of development and reflect more equal treatment (Volling & Elin, 1998).

Parents may also contribute to dysfunctional relationships between siblings through the allocation of specific labels and roles to the children, which tend to have a tremendous impact and are often carried throughout the children's lives (Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Mander, 1991; Ross & Milgram, 1982). The adoption of particular roles may be initiated by the parents or the children, and can be helpful in allowing the siblings to develop individual identities, see themselves as separate from one another, and minimize competition by providing each child with an area in which to excel (Bryant, 1982; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994). Thus, some roles may be natural to the child and may be complementary between the children, which will allow each child in the family to develop his/her own niche and areas of talent (Bank & Kahn, 1982a; Hapworth et al., 1993). In addition, the adoption of separate tasks and abilities will often allow the children to feel a sense of accomplishment about their own talents, while being able to appreciate their siblings' gifts as well (Klagsbrun, 1992).

The difficulty arises when roles are assigned, rather than naturally developed, as some role placements may lead to an increase in sibling rivalry due to feelings of envy or competition (Hapworth et al., 1993; Ross & Milgram, 1982). Many of the roles that are assigned to siblings tend to be opposite to one another, with one end of the continuum being imbued with more value than the other (Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994). For example, these authors state that when one child is labeled as "smart," the other frequently assumes he or she is "stupid," when one is "pretty" the other feels "ugly," and so on. Thus, in cases such as these, children may suffer from low self-esteem, feelings of anger and resentment, and jealousy.

Labels and roles can also be self-fulfilling, leading to self-imposed limitations, avoidance of certain activities, and less of a connection with a sibling who is believed to be very different (Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992). Some of these role allocations may lead to siblings "being cheated of their rightful opportunities because of a sibling's special prowess" (Faber & Mazlish, 1987, p. 115). In addition, Hapworth and colleagues state that once children have been assigned particular roles, they may "guard their own turf, which, they feel, is their exclusive territory" (p. 89). Thus, a child may not develop certain talents due to the belief that it is not his/her "area," which may lead to an inability to fully enjoy life or develop one's potential, as well as feelings of inadequacy, discontent, and jealousy; in order to avoid this, parents need to ensure that they do not exclude a child from certain activities simply because his/her sibling displays a particular talent, as no child should be robbed of the "joys of scholarship, dance, drama, poetry, [or] sport" (Faber & Mazlish, 1987, p. 115).

Another role which seems to have a detrimental effect on sibling relationships is the expectation that one of the siblings can act as a substitute parent, which may lead to extreme feelings of resentment over having to take on the extra responsibility (Coles, 1998; Goetting, 1986; Ross & Milgram, 1982; Sandmaier, 1994; Wiehe, 1998). Additionally, it has been found that siblings who act as caretakers tend to take advantage of this powerful position by giving more physical punishment to their siblings than their parents would or attempting to frighten a weaker sibling into carrying out his/her wishes (Bryant, 1982; Hapworth et al., 1993). Conversely, the parented sibling may also respond negatively to a sibling's attempts at power and control, which may result in aggression or distancing behaviours in order to avoid a sibling's command (Klagsbrun, 1992).

Another detrimental parental reaction to sibling maltreatment is acceptance of such behaviour as being an inevitable aspect of the sibling relationship. Many parents may even encourage such behaviour, with the belief that conflict between siblings provides important training for handling conflict in other interpersonal relationships in the future (Cicirelli, 1995; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996; Rosenthal & Doherty, 1984; Wiehe, 1997b). Bank (1988) and Faber and Mazlish (1987) write that children are often further traumatized when parents allow these injustices to occur repeatedly. In a qualitative study on sibling abuse, Wiehe (1997b) reported that many of the victims claimed that their parents were aware of the maltreatment that was occurring between the siblings, with 71% being aware of physical abuse and 69% being aware of emotional abuse. However, these parents did not do anything to intervene or help the sibling who was being victimized. In another study, Martin and Ross (1995) found that parents intervened on approximately half of their children's violent interactions; these authors stated that this seemed to give the children inconsistent messages about the acceptability of aggression, as parents stated that maltreatment was unacceptable and yet did not always stop it when it occurred. Thus, it seems that although many parents are aware of what is happening, they are choosing to ignore or tolerate this behaviour (Hanoski, 1998). This could be labeled another form of parental child abuse or neglect, as the parents, who are responsible for the well-being of their children, are allowing one of their children to be repeatedly maltreated (Green, 1984).

Parents may be reluctant to intervene on their children's disputes, as they may feel that they are responding to inappropriate bids for attention, which will simply give the children the reaction they are looking for and reinforce maladaptive behaviours (Brody & Stoneman, 1987; Dunn, 1984). Parents may also believe that by intervening, they will be interrupting a necessary learning process and their children will not learn how to resolve conflict appropriately. Findings have been inconclusive with regard to studies which have examined the effect of parental intervention on sibling altercations. For example, findings from some studies indicate that parental intervention can be helpful if done in a manner which is firm and consistent, and without any favouritism or taking of sides (Bennett, 1990; Dunn, 1984; McGuire, Manke, Eftekhari, & Dunn, 2000). Ross, Filyer, Lollis, and Perlman (1994) report that in their study, parental intervention was useful in that it helped to decrease the amount and intensity of sibling disputes and led to the development of a set of rules for the siblings to follow.

Conversely, in a study conducted by Volling and Belsky (1992), findings indicated that conflict tended to decrease if parents did *not* intervene in their children's negative interactions; this finding was attributed to the belief that children learn the necessary skills to resolve conflict if they are left to work out their own disputes. Similarly, in another study, parental intervention into sibling disputes was found to be related to a greater level of negativity within the sibling relationship (McHale, Updegraff, Tucker, & Crouter, 2000). However, these authors state that they did not find any evidence for siblings learning appropriate conflict resolution tactics when left on their own; rather, they stated that correlations between positive relations between siblings and parental non-involvement were more likely due to the existence of a healthy sibling relationship despite any conflict they were experiencing. In another study conducted by Felson (1983), university students, who were asked to describe their experiences of sibling conflict in adolescence and childhood, reported that conflict tended to increase when their mothers intervened.

These contradictory findings may be due to the fact that different levels of negative interaction are being examined in these studies. For example, in situations of conflict, parental intervention may not be helpful, whereas in cases of maltreatment, intervention by parents may be necessary (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Hanoski, 1998). Caffaro and Conn-Caffaro write that parents need to be aware of the difference between conflict and maltreatment. They also need to ensure that they intervene whenever one of the children asks for help, a child is about to be injured, or there is a habitual instigator and victim in their children's altercations. These inconclusive findings may also be related to differing developmental levels of siblings, as intervention may be more beneficial with young children, as opposed to adolescents (McHale et al., 2000).

The Emotional Climate of the Family

In addition to the characteristics and intervention strategies of the parents, sibling relationships seem to be affected by the parents' psychological adjustment and the emotional climate in the family (Brody & Stoneman, 1987; Brody & Stoneman, 1994; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Frude, 1993; Green, 1984; Hanoski, 1998; Wiehe, 1998; Withecomb, 1997). As well as by creating stress and anxiety in the children, these factors will have an effect on how the parents manage the sibling relationship. For example, Brody and Stoneman (1987) and Freeman (1993) state that parents with emotional difficulties do not function as well, and will often be less involved, less affectionate, more controlling, and will have more communication problems with their children than parents who are not suffering from any emotional difficulties. Brody and Stoneman (1987) conducted a study on the factors which may contribute to sibling conflict and found that there were more negative interactions between siblings in families where the parents reported less enjoyment with one another, lower levels of marital satisfaction, and more family conflicts.

Sibling maltreatment has been linked to a variety of negative family circumstances, such as marital difficulties, drug or alcohol abuse, mental or physical illness, financial difficulties, death in the family, and separation or divorce (Brody & Stoneman, 1996; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Freeman, 1993; Hanoski, 1998; Kratcoski, 1984; Ross & Milgram, 1982; Train, 1993). Other factors, such as poverty, unemployment, social isolation, limited education, and placement in foster homes have also been found to be related to a dysfunctional sibling relationship (Rosenthal & Doherty, 1984; Whipple & Finton, 1995). Furthermore, Freeman (1993) writes that sibling maltreatment can escalate during stressful periods, such as when a new baby is born or during a divorce; according to Kratcoski (1985), violent behaviour may be used as a means to cope with intolerable stress, especially when the child's coping mechanisms and natural defenses are inadequate in coping effectively. As stated by Bank (1988) "sibling conflicts, when extreme, bitter, and prolonged, are a significant outgrowth of a disturbing family situation which could not, originally, have been the children's fault," (p. 342).

Conversely, some researchers have reported that stressful events may have a beneficial effect on the quality of a sibling relationship, serving to bring the siblings closer to one another as they strive to support and comfort each other (Dunn, 1996; Goetting, 1986; Klagsbrun, 1992; Ross & Milgram, 1982; Sandmaier, 1994). The need to be supportive in times of need may be linked to some of the mystery of the sibling bond, where siblings feel that they *have* to protect one another; as quoted from a novel by Roth (as cited in Klagsbrun, 1992), one of the characters states that there is a "need to be responsible, not so much to the disapproving brother with whom I'd already come to blows but to the little boy in the flannel pajamas who was known to sleepwalk when he was overexcited" (p. 52). While researchers have found that the impact of a stressful event largely depends on the circumstances of the stressor, they have also discovered that the effect is often related to the quality of the sibling relationship before the event occurred; thus, if a sibling relationship was characterized by negativity prior to the stressor, these negative tendencies would become more extreme when the children were facing difficulties (Klagsbrun, 1992; Ross & Milgram, 1982; Sandmaier, 1994). As described by Sandmaier "...whether a turning point leads to renewal or rupture depends...on the pre-existing investment that each sibling has in the relationship...a crisis tends to lay bare the 'truth' of the bond..." (p. 187).

As alluded to in an earlier section, family systems theory has been used to try to explain the finding that the quality of the sibling relationship is often related to the quality of other relationships in the family. This theory proposes that families operate as a system, or a "composite entity, a unit", where "the behavior [sic] of every member of the system is related to and dependent on the behavior [sic] of all the others" (Nichols & Schwartz, 1995, p. 195). This means that the quality of the sibling relationship will be affected by the interactions within the family as a whole, as well as the quality of the relationship between the parents and between each parent and each child (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Cicirelli, 1995; Kashani et al., 1992; Sandmaier, 1994). In addition, children learn many of their values from the family system, such as the importance of family, interaction styles, acceptable levels of intimacy, communication of feelings, and appropriate levels of dependence (Sandmaier, 1994). Thus, the quality of the sibling relationship can often be negatively impacted by other negative relationships or beliefs within the family. Kashani and colleagues (1992) add that in a family marked by violence, dysfunctional relationships are likely to exist between violent individuals and other members of the family, placing all family members at risk for abusive interactions with one another.

Another theory which has been used to explain the relationship between negative family climate and sibling maltreatment is attachment theory, which is usually used to refer to the bonds which develop between children and their parents (Bank, 1992; Bank & Kahn, 1982b; Cicirelli, 1995; Coles, 1998; Dunn, 1996). However, these authors state that when the attachment bond that develops between a child and his/her parent is inadequate, the child will often turn to his/her sibling. According to Bank (1992) this "vacuum of parental care" leads a child to develop an attachment to his/her sibling which can be highly intense and disturbed (p. 145). Bank states further:

> When parents are frightening, abandoning, or invisible, siblings are not minor players in the family drama; they are the stars: the villains and the heroes who play a significant role in the child's life-and-death struggles for attachment, separateness, and identity.

Bank and Kahn (1982b) write that an unhappy attachment is better than none at all, and that even though a sibling attachment is often incomplete, unsatisfactory, and anxious, it fills the void left by the parent. However, this type of attachment bond to a sibling may contribute to the development of maltreatment between siblings, as the sibling who has been cast into the role of the attachment figure does not often have the maturity, sensitivity, or competency necessary to care for the needy child, and may also have feelings of ambivalence and hostility about being used as a substitute attachment figure (Bank & Kahn, 1982b). Another aspect of attachment theory that may come into play is the finding that the style of attachment a child has with his/her mother often serves as a prototype for the style of attachment that is formed with his/her sibling (Cicirelli, 1995). In other words, Cicirelli believes that a disturbed attachment between a child and his/her parents may lead to the development of a dysfunctional attachment style within the sibling relationship.

Parents who find themselves in an extremely stressful family situation may be transferring their feelings of dissatisfaction onto their children, who may then turn to one another for a "basic striving for relatedness" (Kahn, 1988, p. 4). Kahn goes on to say that children may use violence as a way to experience intense feelings, as opposed to the emotional numbness which may exist within the family. Thus, according to Kahn, maltreatment of a sibling may be a way for the siblings (both instigators and victims) to say, "I'm alive! Someone is paying attention to me" (p. 12). As time passes, the victim of sibling maltreatment may become dependant on the instigator as an emotional stand in for the neglect of the parents, and come to be even more vulnerable to being maltreated (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998). Victims also tend to be quite understanding of the instigating siblings difficulties, often excusing their behaviour due to the stresses of the family: "I feel...sorry for him... He was trying to survive. He did the best he could. He didn't know any other way... So, I just feel more compassion for him than anger," (Hanoski, 1998, p. 117). Thus, it appears that family emotional climate has a significant contribution to the quality of the sibling relationship and the way in which siblings perceive and interpret their experiences.

Sibling Relationships Versus Extra-Familial Relationships

Some interesting comparative studies have been conducted in order to examine the quality of sibling relationships as compared to peer relationships. For example, in one study conducted by Dunn (1984), children reported more physical fights with their siblings than with children outside of the family. Findings in this study indicate that 29% of siblings reported having physical fights "often," as opposed to only 7% of peers, and peers reported only half as many physical fights "sometimes" (32% of peers versus 64% of siblings). One of the limitations to this study is the fact that the researchers did not examine whether siblings who were more aggressive with their siblings were also more aggressive with their peers. This would be important to examine, due to the belief that aggression learned within the family tends to be carried into extra-familial relationships as the children get older.

Brody, Stoneman, MacKinnon, and MacKinnon (1985) conducted a similar study in which they compared the quality of the interpersonal interactions between sibling dyads, peer dyads, and peer triads. Findings from this study indicate that siblings display more negative behaviours with one another than that shown by peers. Newman (1994) states that differences between sibling and peer relationships may arise from the fact that relationships with peers are more reciprocal and balanced than sibling relationships, which tend to be more hierarchical and unequal. Other possible explanations for these differences include: siblings do not choose whether to spend time together or not, there is often more competition between siblings than friends, siblings have a shared family history, and siblings have a sense of obligation to one another which may lead to feelings of resentment (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Newman, 1994). Thus, there seem to be inherent characteristics of the sibling relationship which make it more susceptible to violence than relationships with peers.

As previously stated, the Cyclical Hypothesis of Abuse proposes that violent behaviour learned within the family is often perpetuated in further generations and in other interpersonal relationships as the child grows older (Herzberger, 1996; Truscott, 1989; Widom, 1989). Findings from several studies indicate that violent relations between siblings tend to socialize them to behave violently in other interpersonal relationships (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Garcia et al., 2000; Frude, 1993; Gully et al., 1981; Koski, 1987; Loeber, Weissman & Reid, 1983, as cited in Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Patterson et al., 1984; Stormshak et al., 1996). This especially seems to be the case when aggression with a sibling is experienced in conjunction with a rejecting relationship with one's parents; thus, there appears to be an additive effect for children experiencing dysfunctional relationships with both parents and siblings, leading to a greater likelihood of aggression in relationships outside of the family (Garcia et al., 2000; Koski, 1987). As described by Frude (1993), siblings play a "pivotal role" in the development of succeeding violent behaviour (p. 89).

Treatment and Intervention Strategies

Although somewhat limited, there has been some previous research on intervention strategies for parents and treatment programs for aggressive siblings. It is extremely important that parents be firm, consistent, and loving, provide adequate supervision, and refrain from using corporal punishment (Dunn, 1984; Severe, 2000; Wiehe, 1997b). Parents also need to ensure that they model appropriate conflict resolution strategies, as well as practice an appropriate parenting style, one which does not ignore sibling maltreatment nor encourage it (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Cicirelli, 1994; Kashani et al., 1992; Snyder & Schrepferman, 1997). As much of the previous research has indicated that children may learn to behave violently by modeling their parents' behaviour, it is imperative that they "unlearn" such behaviour and replace it with a more adaptive means of resolving conflict (Kratcoski, 1985, p. 156). This would include the direct teaching of appropriate methods for dealing with conflict, such as verbal discussion, negotiation, compromise, and problem solving techniques (Cicirelli, 1995; Wiehe, 1997b). Parents could also encourage feelings of support and loyalty between siblings by modeling, actively teaching, and reinforcing positive behaviour (Bank & Kahn, 1982a).

It is important that parents encourage the expression of difficult emotions so that they "do not go underground and appear in other forms" (Faber & Mazlish, 1987, p. 39). They also need to set appropriate boundaries and limitations to their children's expression of negative feelings, so that they are encouraged to share them but not to hurt one another in the process (Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992). Snyder and Schrepferman (1997) write that parents can learn how to appropriately soothe their children when they are feeling emotionally overwhelmed, so that they do not act out as a result of an inability to cope with intense emotionality; children will also need to be taught how to self-soothe so that they learn how to regulate their own emotions when a parent is not present. Faber and Mazlish and Severe (2000) advocate the use of symbolic methods of releasing feelings, such as hitting a doll or pillow, drawing or painting, writing out one's feelings or a list of grievances, or asking the children to describe fantasies of how they wish things could be. These authors state that parents could encourage the use of these strategies by using them themselves when feeling angry or upset, which would serve as a model for the children on how to deal with their feelings. Severe adds that teaching calming techniques, such as deep breathing, can be helpful in reducing aggressive interactions, as well as practicing role plays for anger management.

Parents also need to ensure that they build an awareness of abuse in their children, reward positive sibling interactions, and encourage their children to tell them if maltreatment is occurring (Wiehe, 1997b). In many cases, children will respond to a parent's expectations for behaviour; thus, parents need to demand that their children behave in healthy ways and hold them accountable if they do not follow through (Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Severe, 2000; Wylie, 2000). By doing this, Faber and Mazlish state that parents will "free the bully to be compassionate... [and] free the victim to be strong" (p. 125). Wiehe and Faber and Mazlish emphasize that parents have to learn to listen and believe what their children tell them and seek help if they cannot find a way to stop the maltreatment from happening.

The most important step in intervention is the ability to recognize and identify sibling maltreatment when it is occurring (Gelles, 1997; Kashani et al., 1992). Cicirelli (1995) writes that when parents recognize physical or emotional abuse, they may need to use more active interventions in order to avoid any negative ramifications which could arise as a result of sibling maltreatment. Faber and Mazlish (1987) describe a five step process for coping with *conflict* between siblings, which includes acknowledging each child's feelings, listening to each child's side with respect, showing appreciation for the difficulty of the problem, expressing faith in the children's ability to find a solution, and leaving the situation so that the children have an opportunity to resolve the issue. In a study conducted by Siddiqui and Ross (1999), this type of parental mediation, where the parents intervened in their children's disputes but still allowed them to resolve their own issues, was the most effective way for children to learn conflict resolution in future negative interactions; thus, it appears that parents can be actively involved in encouraging cooperative negotiation and compromise, while still leaving the children to arrive at their own solutions, rather than forcing their own judgements and ideas for resolution.

In cases of maltreatment or abuse, Faber and Mazlish (1987) advocate a three step process whereby the parent interrupts the interaction using a loud, forceful voice, expresses the fact that the children are not permitted to hurt each other, and separates the children with a time out. In a study conducted by Olson and Roberts

(1987), findings indicated that giving children a time out was a key component to reducing aggressive interactions, as well as using social skills training and parent education. Whether this finding reflects the impact of consequences or of taking time apart from one's sibling, it seems to be imperative that the children be separated when they begin to engage in abusive interactions. This would then be followed by a discussion of the incident in order to find a resolution, express feelings, apologize for hurtful behaviours, and reinforce healthier ways of coping with conflicts (Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Severe, 2000).

Wiehe (1998) outlines a four step problem solving procedure for intervening on sibling maltreatment that follows the acronym SAFE: *S*topping the negative behaviour and *S*etting a climate for problem solving; *A*ssessing what is happening between the children by listening to each child's side and paying attention to both facts and feelings; *F*inding out what will work to resolve the problem, such as looking at alternative solutions and setting rules to follow; and *E*valuating the solution at a later date to see if the agreed upon resolution has been followed and if it is satisfactory to both children so that the family can make any necessary revisions. This procedure is similar to others that have been discussed, as it stops hurtful behaviour from occurring, allows parents to model more appropriate behaviours, gives children an opportunity to express their feelings, and leaves the problem solving to the children while the parents mediate the process.

If parents experience concern or difficulty in curbing sibling maltreatment, it would be important for them to seek professional help, in the way of family counselling or counselling for the children. Counsellors must be made aware of the phenomenon of sibling maltreatment and ensure that they inquire into the quality of the sibling relationship whenever a family enters counselling (Hanoski, 1998; Wiehe, 1998). Caffaro and Conn-Caffaro (1998) and Wiehe (1998) describe situations where clients in therapy have attended counselling for months or years, and have never been questioned about their sibling relationship. Due to the tremendous impact that a sibling can have on one's development, it is imperative that parents seek professional help when necessary and that counsellors be aware of the issues involved with sibling maltreatment.

Although intervention programs for sibling maltreatment are virtually non-existent (Gelles, 1997), Herzberger (1996) has outlined several important points which need to be considered in the development of such a program. For example, she states that high-risk children should be identified and placed in programs which are both educational and supportive. Fraser (1996) writes that these intervention programs will need to be initiated with pre-schoolers, as aggression is a stable trait which is often easily observable in very young children. Green (1984) and Whipple and Finton (1995) write that treatment strategies need to involve the entire family in order to teach parents appropriate intervention strategies, as well as to help the family learn appropriate methods of communication and conflict management. These authors state further that due to the fact that many of the causes of sibling maltreatment can be attributed to parental characteristics or negative family climate, it is essential that sibling maltreatment be treated as a family issue, and that parents seek the support and counselling that they may need to deal with their own difficulties.

Reid and Donovan (1990) have proposed an intervention program for aggressive siblings, which they describe as using a problem solving, task-centered approach to focus on the family as the unit of treatment. These authors conducted a study in order to test the efficacy of this program and have reported that their model was successful in reducing sibling and parental aggression. However, this study was a single case evaluation, and may not be as effective with other siblings and families. Thus, although this treatment program sounds promising, more research with a greater number of participants is necessary in order to determine its utility.

Conflict resolution groups for children may also be effective in working with children who engage in aggressive acts against a sibling (Lane, 1995). Similar groups have been described for use as anti-bullying campaigns in the schools, which could easily be adapted to treat siblings who are involved in sibling maltreatment (Wylie, 2000). Such groups can be used to help children to accept, encourage, and explore healthier behaviours through observing peers, engaging in role play, keeping a conflict log, expressing feelings, watching videos, and giving demonstrations to their families or schools (Lane, 1995; Wiehe, 1997a; Wylie, 2000). As one's peer group can be quite influential on a child's behaviour, this format may be especially helpful in encouraging new behaviours. In addition, a sibling pair could be enrolled in such a group, which would allow them to observe one another and gain awareness into each other's feelings and viewpoint (Lane, 1995). The facilitator could also make an effort to praise siblings for adaptive behaviours, so that they begin to see one another from a new perspective. As described by Wiehe (1997a), whether involved in group or individual therapy, the development of empathy may need to be an integral part of a treatment program for aggressive children, including such activities as writing narratives from the victims' perspective or discussing how the victim may feel when he/she is maltreated. In addition, art therapy, psychodrama, and workbooks on empathy would be helpful in aiding children in becoming more compassionate (Wiehe, 1997a).

Lane (1995) and Wylie (2000) write that psycho-educational groups could be used both for prevention of maltreatment, as well as intervention when maltreatment is already occurring. Furthermore, these authors state that a component of the group could be used for parent education, which would allow parents to gain a greater understanding of their children and learn how to help them resolve conflicts in a more adaptive manner. As described by Wylie, the process of teaching children appropriate behaviour needs to be adult-directed, as children are not likely to follow through if parents do not take "immediate and unambiguous action" when children act out inappropriately; this would include intervening on *all* negative interactions, as the "little mean stuff...can rapidly deteriorate into bigger, much nastier" behaviours (p. 33). As part of this process, Wylie advocates ranking behaviours in order of their level of negativity, and consistently implementing consequences that correspond to the severity of the behaviours. She also states that it is important that children spend time thinking and discussing their behaviour, admitting their transgressions, acknowledging the impact they have had on others, and exploring other options for coping with difficulties.

In order to prevent negative effects of sibling maltreatment from perpetuating themselves in adulthood, siblings will need to become aware of the patterns they are recapitulating and replace these with more desirable behaviours through a process of monitoring their behaviour and changing their reactions slowly over time (Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994). In some cases, individuals may require professional assistance to work through their feelings, heal past wounds, become aware of how they are being impacted in the present, and adopt new perspectives (Hapworth et al., 1993; Sandmaier, 1994). Siblings may also be able to become closer by consciously striving to break the habit of emphasizing their differences, and instead look for ways in which they are similar (Klagsbrun, 1992). By working to build a closer relationship with one's sibling, forgive the past, and create change, siblings will be able to reach a "...peace with one another...becom[ing] freer to relate to others as individuals and not as shadows of old history..." (Klagsbrun, 1992, p. 376).

The Current Study

The current study follows from several qualitative studies which have been conducted recently in the area of sibling maltreatment. For example, Wiehe (1997b) used questionnaires to elicit descriptions of sibling experiences from those who felt they had been victims of sibling abuse. Another qualitative study was conducted by Crane (1997), who used open-ended interviews with ten participants who stated that they had been recipients of physical or emotional abuse by a sibling. Although these studies were extremely informative and represent seminal work in the area of sibling maltreatment, they may have been somewhat limited by the fact that both researchers used the term "abuse" when recruiting participants. As previously noted, many siblings are reluctant to label sibling "conflicts" as abuse or to acknowledge that their negative interactions were this severe (Wilson & Fromuth, as cited in APA, 1997). Thus, participants in these studies may have been involved in the most extreme of cases and the researchers may have unwittingly excluded those who were maltreated by siblings but did not label such treatment as being abusive.

Other studies have been conducted which have used alternate labels to recruit participants, which may have allowed those who were not comfortable or accepting of the term "abuse" to be included in these studies. Caffaro and Conn-Caffaro (1998) conducted a qualitative study using the terms sibling incest and assault. These researchers used in-depth interviews with 73 adult survivors, and used transcripts of these interviews to describe many different aspects of the experience, including risk factors, family characteristics, and intervention strategies. I (Hanoski, 1998) conducted another study on the victims of sibling maltreatment, using open-ended interviews with four participants and writing narratives of their experiences. Several other authors have conducted qualitative studies on sibling relationships or have written about their clinical experiences with siblings in a counselling setting (Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994); while these writings do not focus exclusively on maltreatment between siblings, they lend a great deal of insight into more general aspects about relationships between siblings, and would often inevitably touch on the topic of sibling conflict or maltreatment as being an important aspect of most sibling relationships.

These qualitative studies were extremely helpful in providing detailed descriptions of the phenomenon, using examples and quotes from the participants to bring these experiences to life. Some of the themes which were identified as being salient aspects of sibling maltreatment include: experiencing "relentless fear" of being physically attacked, feeling that his/her parent(s) did not intervene appropriately, superficial adult sibling relationships, questioning "why" the abuse occurred, extreme feelings of loyalty towards the perpetrating sibling, and having several negative effects from the maltreatment, such as loss of self-esteem, depression, lack of trust in others, and anger (Crane, 1997; Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Hanoski, 1998; Hapworth et al., 1993;

Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994; Wiehe, 1997b). While these findings seem to indicate that sibling maltreatment is an extremely important phenomenon, with many implications for counselling and parenting, most of the above studies discussed the experience from the victims' point of view; thus, the current study aimed to provide more understanding of sibling maltreatment from the instigating siblings' perspective.

In the current study, I used some of the methods that I used previously (Hanoski, 1998) in order to examine the instigators' point of view. Thus, I conducted in-depth interviews and used the transcripts of the interviews to write narratives of the participants' experiences. I also conducted in-depth interviews with a sibling dyad, in order to hear "both sides of the story". The questions which guided me throughout this process were as follows: (1) How do instigators describe their experiences of maltreating a sibling? What are their feelings and perceptions regarding these experiences? And (2) How do the stories of sibling maltreatment told by the victim and instigator from the same sibling dyad compare? How do their perceptions, feelings, and memories of these experiences differ, and how are they the same? The methods I used are described in greater detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

Method

In this chapter, I describe the methods that I used in the present study, including the underlying philosophy and assumptions of hermeneutics and the use of narratives. In the next section, I describe the steps I followed to recruit participants, as well as to collect and analyze the data. This chapter also includes a description of trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Research Design

As previously stated, much of the previous research which has been conducted in the area of sibling maltreatment has been quantitative enquiries, examining such aspects of the phenomenon as prevalence rates, effects of gender, age, and age gap, and comparisons between sibling violence and violence in other interpersonal relationships. These studies have been invaluable in heightening awareness of the existence of sibling maltreatment, as well as in contributing a great deal of knowledge regarding many of the quantitative aspects of the phenomenon. However, the aspects of the phenomenon which are of the most interest and importance to me, such as the feelings, thoughts, possible regrets, and personal meanings of the experience for the participants, are those which cannot be quantified. Qualitative methods can be used to explore aspects of the phenomenon which may have been missed or ignored in other studies and are also helpful in that they allow the researcher to obtain detailed descriptions of a phenomenon, in the participants' own words. Furthermore, the use of a qualitative design allows the researcher to highlight both the dramatic and subtle differences between the participants' experiences.

Although more researchers are using qualitative methods to study sibling maltreatment, none have specifically examined the instigator's perspective, thoughts, or feelings about sibling maltreatment. In addition, I am not aware of any published studies which have included both the instigator and victim of a sibling dyad as participants, in order to examine "both sides of the story". As my aim in this study was to examine these various aspects of the phenomenon which have not been researched as of yet, the use of qualitative methods allowed me to engage in a preliminary exploration of these areas for which we have not yet garnered much understanding. More specifically, the use of narrative permitted me to derive "stories" of the experience, which contained the elements of the phenomenon that the participants felt were important to include. Thus, these methods provided much insight into a neglected form of family violence which is greatly in need of more investigation.

Hermeneutic Approach

Patton (1990) describes hermeneutics as a qualitative approach in which it is asked: "What are the conditions under which a human act took place...that makes it possible to interpret its meanings?" (p. 84). In other words, the goal of hermeneutics is to provide meaning and understanding of a certain phenomenon through the description and interpretation of the participants' stories of the experience (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). Leonard (1989) writes that hermeneutics is also used to understand common skills, practices, and behaviours, to find commonalities of a particular phenomenon across participants, and to describe exemplars and paradigm cases of the experience in order to exemplify the salient aspects of the phenomenon. Walker (1996) states that although the hermeneutic approach is more commonly used when analyzing written data, it has also been used to capture the "lived experience" of participants by analyzing dialogue obtained through the use of interviews (p. 225).

Interpretation in hermeneutics includes the use of a hermeneutic circle, which involves the examination of the parts of a participant's experience as they relate to the phenomenon as a whole; in turn, the whole of the phenomenon is reexamined in light of insights which have been provided through the examination of the parts (Leonard, 1989; Patton, 1990). Interpretation continues in this manner, moving back and forth between the parts and the whole, until a satisfactory level of understanding has been reached by the researcher (Kvale, 1986). Kvale (1987) writes further:

> In principle... a hermeneutical explication of the text is an infinite process |which| ends in practice when a sensible meaning, a coherent understanding, free of inner contradictions, has been reached (p. 62, as cited in Patton, 1990).

Several assumptions of the hermeneutic approach have been described by Leonard (1989). One of these is the understanding that researchers can never be completely objective, as each individual has had his/her own life experiences, as well as a cultural and linguistic background, which will influence how he/she sees the world. In turn, this worldview will have an impact on a researcher's beliefs, feelings, and opinions, as well as provide a focus for the research and the aspects of experience to which he/she will pay the most attention. Despite the subjectivity on the part of the researcher, Leonard writes that reliability can be obtained in a qualitative study by identifying commonalities of the experience, as well as by corroborating the findings with the participants. Leonard also believes that the goal of hermeneutics differs from the goal of many quantitative studies, in that the aim of the researcher is not to predict future behaviour or to provide a formal theory; instead, the "theory" that the researcher strives to provide involves a description of the significance of the phenomenon for the participants, as well as the meanings the participants have made of their experiences.

When considering the research questions that guided this project, hermeneutics seemed to be a highly appropriate approach to use to achieve my goals and aims for this study, which included gaining a deeper understanding of the meanings the participants had made of their sibling experiences and exploring the perceptions, feelings, and beliefs the participants had about their sibling relationship. In the hermeneutic approach, value is also placed on the uniqueness of experience, which was important in this study as I wanted to discover the differences that existed between participants, in addition to the commonalities between them (Walker, 1996). By using an interpretive approach such as this, I believed that many of the missing links in the sibling puzzle could be filled, resulting in a fuller picture which includes the perspective and thoughts of the instigators, as well as the alternate accounts of the sibling story as told by the sibling dyad.

The Use of Narrative

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of sibling maltreatment from the instigator's perspective, I conducted narrative interviews, in which the participants were encouraged to tell detailed accounts of events which occurred with their siblings throughout their lifetime. Questions were presented in such a way as to elicit storytelling from the participants, and they were probed for more details when necessary. In order to give participants an opportunity to develop their own sibling stories, I followed an unstructured interview format, where questions emerged through each interview in an individualized fashion, rather than following a prescribed interview guide. As described by Susko (1994), the narrative approach allows each participant to create a meaningful life story, with his/her own meanings and explanations for events that have occurred in their lives. Susko writes further that due to the fact that one's self narrative is completely self-created and does not contain any prerequisite elements, each individual has the freedom to develop his/her life story in whatever manner suits his/her personality and worldview.

Narratives are present throughout each of our lifetimes, playing a pivotal role in the way in which we make sense of our experiences (Berger, 1997; Riessman, 1993). Narratives show themselves throughout a variety of formats, from the earliest days of life. As stated by Barthes (1988, as cited in Berger, 1997), lullabies are a form of narrative, as are fairy tales, jokes, movies, billboards, and poems. Barthes further explains:

> Numberless are the world's narratives...narrative can be supported by articulated speech, oral or written, by image, fixed or moving, by gesture, and by the organized mixture of all these substances; it is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, tragedy, comedy, epic, history, pantomime, painting...stained glass window, cinema, comic book, news item, conversation. Further, in these almost infinite forms, narrative occurs in all periods, in all places, all societies...there has never been, any people anywhere without narrative... narrative is *there*, like

life (Berger, 1997, p. 89).

One of the main ways in which people learn about themselves is through the use of narratives, as telling stories about one's experiences appears to be a universal human activity, one that begins in childhood and continues throughout one's life (Riessman, 1993). People tend to make sense out of their life experiences by putting them into storied form, combining elements which are relevant into meaningful wholes (Riessman,1993; Ochberg, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1988). According to Riessman, narratives are especially useful when one is attempting to understand a life event which was particularly difficult or traumatic. She believes that the stories developed to describe one's experiences are essential meaning units in themselves, and thus, should be examined as comprehensive wholes, rather than fragmented and analyzed in bits by researchers. Thus, one can study a narrative in order to discover how a participant has understood his/her experiences and made them meaningful (Polkinghorne, 1988). As such, the aims of the narrative approach are similar to those of hermeneutics, where the goal is to discover the meaning that has been attached to certain experiences.

In the current study, I used a hermeneutic approach using narrative stories as the unit of analysis, in order to provide detailed, interpretive accounts of the meaning of sibling maltreatment for the participants. One of the main ideas behind the use of narratives is the belief that people are not simply passive recipients of the events that occur in their lives; rather, events which occur are rendered meaningful by the beliefs, perceptions, and emotions which are attributed and linked to them. Cortazzi (1993) states that narratives allow researchers to preserve these meanings by using the words of the participants. According to Merriam (1988), the most important aspect of data collection is to "get as close" to the phenomenon under investigation as possible, using detailed description, direct quotations, and entire excerpts in order to preserve the words of the participants and describe their experiences in their own terms (p. 68). Thus, the narrative method appeared to be an ideal way for me to address my research questions and gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of sibling maltreatment.

Participants

The process of recruiting the participants began by creating a package consisting of an information sheet describing the study (Appendix I), an informed consent form (Appendix II), a questionnaire on general information about the sibling relationship (Appendix III), and the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) (Appendix IV), which were distributed to a large undergraduate class at the University of Alberta. The information from these forms was used to identify victims and instigators of sibling maltreatment, who were then invited to take part in the later phases of the study.

I used a purposive procedure to recruit participants, which means that I purposely sought out those who had experienced high levels of sibling conflict and could provide rich descriptions of their experiences (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). As stated by Wilson and Hutchinson, the goal in a narrative study is to hear "the fullest story possible" from the participants, in order to discover the "lived experience" (p. 270). Thus, it was essential that the participants had experienced the phenomenon under investigation and were willing and able to describe these experiences. However, I excluded those who had experienced extremely high levels of violence with a sibling, as I was interested in obtaining an intensive sample, rather than an extreme or deviant case sample (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). An intensive sample is described by Gall and colleagues as one in which participants have experienced the phenomenon under study intensely, but not extremely, in order to provide accounts of the phenomenon that are most like the majority and can offer more insight than someone who has had an experience that is drastically different from the norm.

In order to recruit such a sample, I used the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) which provided an overall conflict score for each participant and his/her sibling. The CTS, which has been used to study various forms of family violence, was developed at the University of New Hampshire in 1971(Straus et al., 1980). It has been used to examine the level and severity of family conflict by questioning different family members on the methods that they use to resolve disputes with one another. The scale includes three different conflict resolution tactics which family members may use to resolve their differences: the use of rational discussion and argument, the use of verbal and symbolic means of hurting, such as insults or threats, and the use of physical force or violence (Straus et al., 1980). In the original format, the scale was geared towards the parents and was designed to be read out loud by the researcher. Thus, in order to study sibling maltreatment, I modified the scale slightly and altered the format so that it could be used as a paper-and-pencil test. Permission was granted by the authors of the scale to make the above changes (see Appendix V for the email granting this permission).

For each of the three methods of handling disputes, there are several different options or actions which may have been performed by the student and his/her sibling. The students were asked to reflect back on their lives and to indicate how often each of these actions occurred on a scale ranging from "Never" to "More Than Twenty Times." Scores on the CTS ranged from 0 to 6 for each action performed, with 0 corresponding to "Never" and 6 corresponding to "More Than Twenty." The scores were totaled for all of the actions and compared between siblings. Any participants with extremely high (over 100) or low (less than 10) levels were excluded from the study. Those who indicated that they had been sexually abused by a sibling were excluded as well, as experiences of sexual abuse were not investigated in this study. Also, students who indicated that they were maltreated by more than one sibling, or those who played the role of instigator with one sibling and victim with another, were excluded from the study, as these types of sibling relationships may involve different dynamics than sibling dyads with a clearly identifiable instigator and victim.

Instigators were identified in several ways. On the Sibling Conflict Questionnaire (SCQ), there was a question regarding the initiation of conflict, asking if the student considered him/herself to be the instigator or the recipient, or whether conflict was mutual. Thus, any students who indicated on the SCQ that they experienced high levels of sibling conflict and that they believed that they were the instigator were invited to take part in the study, regardless of their score on the CTS; similarly, anyone who stated that he/she was the recipient of conflict was excluded from the study, regardless of his/her scores on the CTS. Following this, those who indicated that conflict was mutual on the SCQ but had a discrepancy in CTS scores of at least 5 points between them and their sibling were invited to take part in the study. Some participants were also included who had relatively low CTS scores, as their scores were highly discrepant from their siblings and indicated a high level of negative verbal interaction.

Following this process, there were five students who met the criteria and agreed to take part in the individual interviews. The participants met the requirements for inclusion in the study as follows: although Jeremy's scores on the CTS were almost identical with those of his brother, he indicated on the SCQ that he engaged in conflict with his sibling "4-5 times a day, 7 days a week" and that he was the one who started the conflict; Nancy stated that conflict was mutual and occurred weekly, but on the CTS she had a score of 20, indicating a high level of negative verbal interaction, while her brother scored 0; on the CTS, Beth's scores indicated high levels of conflict, with higher scores for her brother than for herself, but she indicated on the SCQ that she was the one who started the conflict and that it occurred twice a month; Jennifer indicated that conflict was mutual and occurred weekly, but had a discrepancy on the CTS between herself and her sister that indicated that she engaged in more negative behaviours than her sister did to resolve disputes.

In order to locate the sibling dyad, I questioned those who agreed to take part in the interview about whether they would consent to their sibling being contacted and invited to be interviewed; this process continued until a participant consented to the inclusion of his sibling in the study. Jack was initially recruited for the instigator portion of the study, as he had high scores on the CTS, with his score being higher than his sister's score (on the SCQ he checked off all of the categories for starting the conflict, being the recipient, and it being mutual, and indicted that conflict occurred "frequently"). When Jill joined the study, she was also asked to fill out the questionnaires; she stated on the SCQ that conflict was mutual and occurred "not often", and she had roughly equivalent scores on the CTS to those of Jack. When Jill agreed to take part in the project, Jack's narrative was shifted to the sibling dyad portion of the study, leaving four instigators and one sibling dyad. Although these sample sizes may seem relatively small, it is an acceptable size for an exploratory, qualitative study (Gall et al, 1996; Patton, 1990), which emphasizes the depth and detail of a few storied experiences, rather than the breadth and generalizabilty of large sample sizes.

Procedure: Data Collection and Data Analysis

Instigator Interviews

Once the study package was distributed and the questionnaires scored, students who met the required criteria were invited to take part in the interview portion of the study. Interviews were used in this study because they have been described as being useful in gathering rich, detailed descriptions of particular experiences (Becker, 1986; Kvale, 1983). According to Becker, interviews often provide more information than written methods, as the researcher can probe and ask for more detailed answers to particular points of interest. Interviews can also be used to gain an understanding of the meanings the participants have made of their experiences and their world-view (Becker, 1986). Ochberg (1996) writes that interviews can be a more effective means for getting close to the experience of the participants, as other methods, such as surveys or questionnaires, can be somewhat alienating.

As previously stated, interviews were unstructured and open-ended, so that the participants were given the opportunity to discuss the events that were important to them, in their own words. Thus, the questioning tended to unfold with the flow of each interview, rather than follow a structured interview guide. I opened with a very general question regarding the conflict that the participants experienced with their siblings, which allowed them to tell their stories in their own way. However, I also asked for more detail or followed up on areas which seemed to be significant to the participants. Questions were posed in such a way as to draw out important units of meaning from the participants' pasts, in a way that attempted to invite them to discuss the experiences that they felt were most important and relevant (Hermans, 1992). It was extremely important that these interviews provided me with enough detail and description to write a narrative which was accurate and true to the experience of each participant. Interviews lasted approximately one to two hours, and were audio-taped so that they could be transcribed at a later time.

Some researchers have stated that there are limitations to the use of interviews, such as the possibility that interview data may involve some distortion from objective truth, the interviewee may selectively recall certain experiences, some memories may be distorted or exaggerated, and the recollection of some events may not be consistent over time (Cortazzi, 1993; Riessman, 1993). However, Riessman argues that there is no true objective reality of personal experience, as the events of our lives are influenced by our interpretation of them, and that the manner in which participants describe their experiences represents the "truth" as they see it. Thus, even if the participant is inadvertently lying, forgetting, or exaggerating his/her stories, his/her narrative reflects a picture of the past, possibly not as it "actually was", but how it was interpreted by the person describing it (p. 22). In this study, then, I obtained narratives that were constructed, creatively authored, and interpreted by the participants (Riessman, 1993).

Each of the interviews was transcribed in full, and these transcriptions were used to write a narrative of each participant's sibling experiences. My goal in writing the narratives was to provide a descriptive account of the stories that had already been constructed by the participants. Each of the narratives contains quotes from the participants, in order to make certain aspects of the phenomenon more personal and real to the reader, as well as to represent the participants' own words during the interview. However, according to Berger (1997) and Ochberg (1996), narratives are often filled with many gaps, blank spaces, and inconsistencies which the researcher must strive to clarify through his/her own interpretations. As stated by Josselson (1996), one of the aims of hermeneutics is to describe the participant's story, but to bring one's own interpretation to the information with which he/she is presented. Thus, the final narratives will be influenced by the researcher's background, knowledge, and worldview (Berger, 1997; Ochberg, 1996).

Due to the fact that I wrote the narratives, I invited each of the participants to read his/her narrative once it was written. Copies of the stories were sent out to the participants with a letter (Appendix VI) requesting any feedback that they would like to provide. Kvale (1986) suggests that this is an important step in the interview process, as it gives the participants an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation, making any necessary additions, deletions, or revisions. After sending out the narratives, I did not receive any requests for changes. Unfortunately, two of the participants had moved and did not respond to any of my attempts to contact them; thus two of the narratives were not sent out or read by the participants.

After the participants had been given an opportunity to read their narratives, analysis continued with a comparison between each of the narratives, in order to identify commonalities, as well as notable unique aspects, of the experience of sibling maltreatment. As described by Leonard (1989), a hermeneutic study often involves three stages of analysis: thematic analysis, identification of exemplars, and development of paradigm cases. The first stage of thematic analysis was accomplished through textual immersion, which is described by Wilson and Hutchinson (1991) as a process in which transcripts or narratives are read and reread several times in order to get a feeling for the phenomenon as a whole and to identify aspects of the experience that are common across participants. I identified several common themes, which were combined into categories and used to describe salient aspects of the phenomenon. By becoming immersed in the data, I was also able to identify notable unique aspects of the phenomenon. Although these unique aspects were only described by one participant, they reflected important aspects of the phenomenon and were thus presented and linked to previous research findings and theories which have been related to sibling maltreatment.

The second stage of analysis involved the identification of exemplars, which are defined as events or incidents which stand out as being particular examples of the phenomenon in question (Leonard, 1989). As stated by Leonard, an exemplar involves "a strong instance of a particularly meaningful transaction..." (p. 54). By using these examples, the author can provide vignettes, or snapshots, of the experience which will bring important aspects of the participants' experiences to life for the reader. These exemplars reflect the themes which were identified in the first stage of analysis, and act as real life situations which exemplify each theme. According to Leonard, the meaning that is contained within these exemplars can also be generalized to other similar situations, which may vary in context from the exemplar but embody the same meaning. Thus, the exemplars, although particular to a certain participant, will also be meaningful to the other participants or to other people who have been involved in maladaptive sibling relationships but were not included in this study.

The third stage of data analysis was the development of paradigm cases, which are described by Leonard (1989) as "strong instances of patterns of particular meanings" (p. 54). Paradigm cases are similar to exemplars, in that they both describe meaningful aspects of the phenomenon. However, exemplars are used to provide insight into particular events or meanings, whereas paradigm cases encompass the meaning the participant has made for his/her experiences as a whole. Thus, paradigm cases can be used to draw out the interpretations and meanings the participants have made of the entire experience of sibling maltreatment. In the current study, these paradigm cases were used to describe the essence of the experience for each of the participants, which was then linked to previous research findings as well as to various theories of family violence. This was done in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the various contexts and situations in which sibling maltreatment is likely to occur, as well as the common meanings and explanations that are used for these experiences by the instigators.

Sibling Dyad Interviews

My aim in this study was to recruit one sibling dyad, in order to simply begin my exploration into the differing perceptions of siblings from the same family. This was accomplished by making requests of the participants who had volunteered to take part in the instigator phase of the study. As one of these participants volunteered to invite his sibling to become involved in the study, his narrative was moved to the dyad portion of the study, leaving four instigators in the initial phase. The two participants of the sibling dyad were interviewed separately, and the questioning followed the same unstructured style as that which was used with the instigators. Once again, the interviews lasted approximately one to two hours, and were audio-taped so that they could be transcribed at a later time. While I had initially wanted to interview the dyad together, as well as individually, I decided that this may not be in the best interests of the participants, as Jill seemed to be somewhat anxious about discussing her sibling relationship and I did not want to subject her to a situation that may have been even more anxiety provoking.

The narratives from the sibling dyad were written in two parts, from both the victim's and the instigator's points of view, so that the stories could be compared to one another. The victim and instigator were each sent a copy of their own narratives, in order to determine their accuracy and request any necessary revisions. Analysis of the dyad narratives followed a similar process as analysis for the instigator narratives. A thematic analysis was conducted in order to identify similarities and differences between the victim's and instigator's experiences. Exemplars were used to show particularly meaningful transactions or events, and paradigm cases were developed to provide a broad description of each sibling's view of their sibling relationship.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers adopt the view that much of our personal reality is subjective and influenced by interpretation. Thus, as stated by Walker (1996) the results of qualitative studies reflect not only the beliefs, opinions, and biases of the participants, but the beliefs, opinions, and biases of the researcher as well. As stated by Torodov (1981):

> ...every work is rewritten by its reader who imposes upon it a new grid of interpretation for which he is not generally responsible but which comes to him from his culture, from his time, in short from another discourse...it is futile and silly to try to leave off being oneself in order to become someone else; were one to succeed, the result would be of no interest...we *gain* by being different from what we seek to understand (p. xxx, as cited in Berger, 1997).

Although qualitative researchers value the subjectivity which is inherent in the interpretation of experience, researchers must also strive to establish credibility and trustworthiness of the results in order for them to be trusted and found meaningful by others. This can be accomplished through the researcher's commitment to providing truthful and accurate depictions of the phenomenon by being balanced, fair, and meticulous in their interpretations of the participants' experiences. Thus, in qualitative studies, the trustworthiness of the researcher and the credibility of the findings becomes much more important than the ability to remain objective.

Leonard (1989) describes four ways in which trustworthiness can be established in a qualitative study: truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. He defines truth value as the accuracy of the description of the phenomenon, from the participants' perspective. Truth value has also been referred to as persuasiveness, which means that the researcher provides an interpretation of the phenomenon which is logical and believable (Riessman, 1993). High levels of truth value and persuasiveness can be accomplished by using quotations from the participants, in order to provide a representation of their actual words. The researcher can also take his/her interpretation of the experience back to the participants to ensure that is accurate and reflects their true experiences; seeking this type of corroboration has been labeled "correspondence" by Riessman (1993).

The second way in which trustworthiness can be established is through the use of applicability, which has been related to the concept of generalizability that is used in quantitative research (Leonard, 1989). Generalizability is not applicable in qualitative studies, due to the small sample sizes and purposive sampling procedures which are often employed. Instead, applicability is used, which means that the interpretations and themes which are provided by the researcher correspond to the experiences of those who have been involved in the phenomenon but have not been included in the study. Thus, the researcher strives to provide an accurate interpretation so that readers of the research will be able to identify with aspects of the phenomenon that fit with their own experiences. One drawback to the concept of applicability is the fact that the representativeness of the findings needs to be established after the study is completed. However, the fact that the participants share many common themes and aspects of the phenomenon, despite the fact that they come from diverse backgrounds and a variety of circumstances, helps to ensure that others will share these common aspects as well.

The third component of trustworthiness is the concept of consistency, which is similar to the concept of reliability used in quantitative studies (Leonard, 1989). Reliability refers to the idea that the findings of a study could be replicated if a similar study was conducted at a later date (Gall et al., 1996). From a hermeneutic perspective, people are constantly changing and perspectives are always shifting; thus, the findings of a qualitative study can never be replicated exactly. Instead, Leonard has proposed the idea of consistency, which means that enough original data is provided so that readers of the research agree with the interpretations and conclusions presented by the researcher. The concept of pragmatic use is also related to reliability, and refers to the extent to which the study leads to subsequent research in a particular area (Riessman, 1993). In the current study, consistency and pragmatic use were established by providing a detailed description of the procedures that were followed in data collection and data analysis, so that others can replicate the study or follow my line of thought in the development of my interpretations of the phenomenon. I have also made raw data available upon request.

The fourth method for the establishment of trustworthiness is the concept of neutrality, which Leonard (1989) uses to refer to the role of the researcher in the interpretation of the findings. As previously stated, qualitative researchers are not expected to be objective in their interpretations. However, it is also essential that the researcher be aware of his/her own opinions, beliefs, prior experiences, and biases which may have an influence on his/her interpretation of the data, as these personal feelings may interfere with an accurate description of the phenomenon. Thus, the researcher must engage in a process called bracketing, which means that he/she identifies any of these presuppositions, preconceptions, experiences, and prior knowledge which may have an influence on the researcher's interpretation of the data. By identifying his/her personal beliefs and ideas, not only will the researcher be more conscious of these influences, but the readers of the research will be made aware of the researcher's perspective as well. In this study, I maintained neutrality by taking part in an interview and providing a narrative of my own experiences with regard to sibling maltreatment, outlining my beliefs, feelings, and thoughts about the phenomenon, as well as the process by which I came to study this area.

Ethical Considerations

There are several ethical considerations that I had to take into account in conducting this study. I submitted the ethical procedures I planned to follow to the Ethical Review Board in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Alberta, and did not proceed with this study until they were approved. I also had an information sheet and informed consent form which described the participants' rights to confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Each participant was required to read and sign this form before proceeding with the questionnaires or the individual interviews. To maintain confidentiality, each participant was assigned a code number, which was used in place of his/her name on the CTS, the audio-tapes, and on any other correspondence that I had with the participants. Finally, I provided a pseudonym for each of the participants and for his/her sibling, which was used to protect their identities in the narratives. I also ensured that any other identifying information was not included in the interview transcripts or the narratives.

The audiotapes, signed consent forms, questionnaires, and CTS were kept in a safe and secure place that was accessible only to myself. The participants were informed that the only people who would see these materials would be myself or my supervisor. The participants were also told that the research materials would have all identifying information removed. Although the interview transcripts and questionnaires will be kept for the purposes of secondary analysis, participants were informed that the audiotapes will be destroyed when my research in this area is completed.

A final ethical consideration that needed to be taken into account is the fact that much of the material that was discussed in these interviews may have been of a highly sensitive nature to the participants. In addition to this, instigators may have had a difficult time with coming to certain realizations about their treatment of their siblings, which may have had a damaging effect on their self-image and self-concept. Thus, in order to alleviate any distress that may have occurred as a result of these interviews, participants were provided with a list of counselling referrals, so that they could continue to discuss these issues with a counsellor if they wished.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis: The Instigators

In this chapter, I provide the instigators' stories of sibling maltreatment, followed by a more in-depth analysis of the phenomenon using the narratives to derive themes, exemplars, paradigm cases, and unique aspects of the experiences of the participants. I begin by presenting my own story, which was developed using a self-interview that was conducted with a colleague in counselling psychology who was familiar with the study and had read my initial research proposal. Through discussion, she was informally provided with a guide of typical questions that arise during the sibling interviews so that she could address the same issues and areas that I planned to touch on when interviewing participants. I also used a variety of other sources of data, such as childhood diaries, self-reflection, and discussions with my parents and brother, to develop my personal narrative. Although I am the narrator of my own story, I have used verbatim excerpts from a variety of data sources, in order to provide the original words I used when describing my experiences and relaying the stories of my sibling relationship.

I wanted to provide my own story for several reasons, all of which contribute to the trustworthiness of the study. The first reason was to use the opportunity of being interviewed and reflecting on my past as a way to become more aware of my own thoughts, biases, and opinions regarding sibling maltreatment so that I would be conscious of how these beliefs may come into play as I analyzed the data. Thus, this process was helpful in maintaining a stance of neutrality and ensuring that I did not "enter the research arena with [an] axe to grind, [a] theory to prove, [or] predetermined results to support" (Patton, 1990, p. 55). Secondly, I wanted to provide the reader with insight into my own experiences, beliefs, and thoughts so that he/she would be aware of my position and viewpoint with regard to the phenomenon, rendering the findings more credible. Finally, I was interested in taking part in the self-interview in order to play the role of the interviewee and gain a greater understanding of the experience of being a participant in this study. Through this experience, I came to gain an even greater respect for each of my participants, for having the courage and strength to share their personal experiences with me.

After presenting my story, I provide the stories for each of the five instigators involved in the study. This is followed by a thematic analysis, which was used to pull common threads of experience from the participants' stories in an effort to describe common aspects of being the instigator of sibling maltreatment. Exemplars are presented throughout the thematic analysis in order to provide concrete examples of each theme from the participants' stories. I then present salient unique aspects of the phenomenon for each of the participants, followed by a description of the paradigm cases, which were used to explore the meanings and interpretations that the participants have made of their sibling experiences.

The Narratives

My Story

Up until a few years ago, I really believed that the relationship I had with my brother was the same as any other sibling relationship; we fought, but who doesn't? However, the more I studied this topic, the more I came to realize that the fighting siblings engage in should not be accepted and tolerated as something that "just happens." Having come to this conclusion, I decided it was important for me to examine my sibling relationship with a more critical eye, so that I could become more aware of where I was coming from. I also believed it was important for the reader to know my background as well. So, with that aim in mind, I pried open the dusty pages of my childhood diaries, weeded through the tangled memories in my mind, raised hard questions and issues with each of my family members, and sat with a colleague to re-analyze all that I recalled. With all of this information before me, I took a deep breath and I began.

November 16, 1983
I hate D. so much! He just hit me, yelled at me, threw celery in my room. I'm never going to talk to him again. I can't even say I hate you because if I do, I have to do lines from mom.

February 1, 1985
I got the highest mark in Social Studies and I got two McDonald's certificates. I wanted to show D., so I knocked on his door. He answered and slammed it in my face (he was talking on the phone). I knocked again, he answered and kicked me. I'm going to tell mom what a jerk he's being and I won't cry.

July 4,1985
Yesterday D. told me that mom wanted me to make a salad for dinner. I didn't believe him and wanted to call mom. He started pushing me down the stairs, hitting me against the wall and gripping my arm really hard. He yanked me down the stairs and I kept fighting back until he let me phone her. I wasn't going to tell her what D. did but I did and started crying and she hung up on me. I don't even want to tell her my problems anymore because she doesn't do anything. She just says quit acting like a baby...

July 9, 1985
I really don't understand D. He is always bothering me. I don't know what I should do. I want him to stop! I could tell mom everything he does but she just doesn't listen and doesn't do anything about it so that won't work.

I began by flipping through the pages of my old diaries, on a quest to further my understanding of my relationship with my brother and to pull my memories back from the depths to which they had been pushed. I was filled with horror, disgust, and sadness as I turned the pages and began to remember the frustration, the anger, and the helplessness. The memories started to come flooding back as I traced my sibling relationship over my lifetime...

When I was a little girl, up until adolescence, I was in awe of my brother. He was two and a half years older, and I thought he was so smart and funny, and very creative. I wanted to be around him all the time, whether it be by putting my Barbies into his trucks while he played beside me, by going to watch him play in his hockey games, or by listening to him concoct new and exciting games to play.

> *He always had really good games. He made them up in his head... They'd be weird things like sitting on the bar stools and making them fly backwards onto a big pile of blankets, and...we would think it was the greatest game ever. [At that age] we were buddies and we used to play together all the time.*

However, despite the fun that we used to have together, there was also a negative side to our relationship, where he would suddenly begin to tease me and treat me badly.

> *...he would switch into this teasing, horrible, mean person. I remember him bragging to my parents and saying, "I can make her cry every single day. Every single day I make her cry." I don't remember how he would do it, but he did. Every day.*

Sometimes it would be over something as simple as calling me names or putting me down. A lot of times he would suddenly demand that I think of a game to play, and then criticize my ideas.

> *We'd be having fun and then he'd say, "Okay, your turn to think up a game." Whatever I suggested would be stupid. [He'd say], "That's so dumb. Why would we ever want to play that?" I would...feel like an idiot. Things like that would make me cry because he'd keep on about how dumb I was and [say] "Can't you think of anything better?"*

Some of his behaviour may have arisen out of a sense of competition between us. Although we each had quite well-defined roles in the family, it's possible that we each wanted to steal some of the other's limelight in whatever area had been designated as our own.

> *In the family he was funny and smart - in life sorts of things. School, that was mine. I was definitely the school smart person and I was much more responsible than him. I was the one who did my chores right and he did them wrong. I don't really know if he was competitive with me. I know I was with him. I felt that with my parents he was...not favoured really, but there was always this thing about him being so funny. I remember them always laughing at him, and me trying to be funny, and it just would always fall flat. One time he went in my mom's closet and got out her wig and her clothes and he went out dressed like her. They thought it was so hilarious and they were taking pictures. Then, I wanted to do it but by then he's already done it so it wasn't funny when I came out of the bedroom. There was tons of stuff like that. He'd build things with lego and they'd be like, "Oh, isn't that creative," and then I'd show*

> *them mine and...mine's not as good. So I [used] school to combat that other stuff. I always did better in school and he could have been a little bit competitive [about that].*

Altercations would also arise between us in situations where he would play on my fears. For example,

> *...my parents went to Hawaii and they brought home this plastic lobster as a toy for us. I was six and I was incredibly scared of it. It looked like a big bug to me and it was very life-like. He would chase me around with it, putting it in my face, and I would just scream in terror. He kept on doing it until my mom finally took it away and put it up on top of the fridge where he couldn't get at it.*

He would also try to prove to me that our dog loved him better.

> *We'd be playing with my dog and he'd suddenly say, "He loves me better than you." [Then] he'd sit him down in the middle of the hallway [with] the two of us at opposite ends and we'd both call [our dog] and he'd always go to him. I don't know, maybe he had food or something...because he'd always go to him and I'd be crying thinking my dog loves him better.*

In addition, there were times when he would do things to me that he called "jokes" but that were extremely mortifying or upsetting. For example,

> *...I was about six. My mom and dad went out and they left us with their friends' son to babysit. They had another son who was just a few years older than my brother. The three of us were fooling around playing. I guess they got together and made up this little plan [where] they suddenly just held me down on the ground and my brother was pulling off my pants while the other one stood there with a camera and took pictures. I remember just struggling, climbing, trying to climb up the carpet, and my brother pulling on my pants while the [other] guy went click, click, click with the camera and then they went, "Ha ha! There's no film in the camera!" It was just this big joke [but] I'm crying, crying, crying... [There was also this]...sense of betrayal [because] here I was, just ten minutes before, playing with them and thinking that these guys are my buddies... [which was] actually a pretty typical pattern where one minute I'm thinking, "Yay! He's cool now. He loves me," and then suddenly he doesn't love me anymore. [At least], as a kid, I would think [he didn't].*

Aside from these more obvious forms of cruelty, it also seemed that even when we were getting along and playing together, we would begin to argue and bicker. When we were younger, it was constant, and we would get in some sort of altercation on a daily basis. Partly this was due to being off on our own unsupervised.

> *After school, we were home alone every day. Or my parents would be home but we'd be off playing outside or in the basement. They weren't around.*

I would try to make my parents aware of what was going on, by telling them what was happening, but they tended to minimize it or tell us to work it out for ourselves. Even more disturbing, was the fact that they seemed to think that some of his antics, such as making me cry every day, were amusing.

> *[There was] a sense of being totally helpless. Knowing what he was doing was not right, yet my parents ignored it. If I said that he's doing this and that, and it makes me cry, they laughed. They were like, "Oh, isn't that funny." They never said, "That's terrible, that he's making you cry every day." It was a bragging thing for him and they would [sound almost impressed, saying], "Gee, you make her cry every day?" and then for him it was just a challenge to keep doing it. I would tell [on him] and my mom's solution was to ignore it. She had this whole philosophy about how if you act like it doesn't bother you, he'll think it doesn't and he won't do it anymore. But he was too smart for that. He knew I was doing that and he would just escalate [his behaviour] until I broke and then I'd be left thinking, "Okay, my parents aren't going to stop him and he knows the tricks I'm doing to try to stop him, so I'm just at his mercy basically."*

One of the most hurtful aspects of my parents' reaction to his behaviour was the occasions when they would join in with his antics. It was at those times when I felt truly alone and helpless.

> *I went through this thing when I was about ten, where I thought sticks were alive. I would go outside and I would pick up sticks and keep them. I had about 8 or 10 of them and I thought they were alive and they were my pet sticks. Then when we were moving, my mom said, "There's no way you're bringing those sticks." I was heartbroken and I had to go and put them in the backyard [and I put] each in a special place and said good-bye to them. Then we moved and we would go on hikes all the time in the woods and my brother, who clued into this "she thinks sticks are alive" thing, would start picking up sticks and breaking them in two. I would just...freak out, thinking they were alive. There was this whole one day where he'd make it so dramatic...he'd hold [the stick] up and then he'd go CRACK! across his knee and I'd be crying and crying; then he'd hit it on a tree, which to me was just, okay, now you're not only killing the stick but you're hurting the tree too. And my parents are laughing and laughing while I'm crying and begging him to stop. They thought it was just so*

> *funny until finally they said, "Stop it. She's being stupid. You better stop." That's what they'd say, "She's being stupid."*

In trying to cope with such incidents, I tried many different strategies.

> *Initially I tried to get help [from my parents], until I gave up. Then ignoring him, which didn't work. I tried sometimes to do it back, which didn't work. I'd try to tease him or hurt him somehow and it just didn't affect him. Everything I tried didn't work. So it got to be where I tried to just avoid him.*
>
> *[Physical fights] were more mutual because I would always try to fight back. I was able to hit back and fight back and if he did anything that hurt me too much, I would tell. That's when I would tell on him and actually get a response. I would tell on the teasing stuff too but my parents seemed to think physical was bad whereas verbal stuff was not an issue. So, he would punch me and I'd punch him back. [But] his would hurt a lot more than mine and he would also do it under the guise of joking. He would be joking, laughing, so anyone looking would think that [we were] just kidding around. But it would hurt. Scratching was my weapon, more than punching or anything, because I couldn't punch as hard and I was able to hurt him by scratching.*
>
> *There was this one time, when we were driving on a family trip to New York... which was ridiculous. I don't know how my parents thought they could drive across the continent...and not have problems with us in the back seat. I remember this one time us bickering back and forth and my parents telling us to be quiet. They got mad. So then we had a totally silent physical fight which developed into scratching. The two of us were scratching each other and when we got out of the car later [we had] blood all over our arms. Both of us. I think he still has scars. My parents were flabbergasted and had no idea we'd been sitting in the car for the last hour just scratching each other.*

Even though I was able to fight back at times, the majority of the time he had the upper hand, as he was always a lot bigger and stronger. In addition, he *always* seemed to have the upper hand when it came to emotional cruelty, as no matter what I said, it never seemed to bother him. There were times when I just became so frustrated that I would act out in an extremely dysfunctional manner.

> *There were times when I just got so fed up. There was once I chased him around with a knife. I was about 8 or 9. And I'd scream and yell, "I hate you" and "I wish you were dead" and all this.*

As we grew older and both entered adolescence, the nature of our relationship changed so that there was very little positive interaction between us. For a while, I still looked up to him, hoping for some sort of friendship with him.

> *When I was in grade 8... he was in grade 10 and we were in the same school. I was excited to have him in my school. I thought, "Cool. My brother's going to be there and I get to hang out with him," but, no, because he didn't even talk to me. I'd see him in the hall and I'd be like, "Hey!" but he would walk by me and just completely ignore me.*

The altercations between us also became more disturbing, as his punches became harder and he began to engage in more troubling "mind games" that made me question my self-worth, as well as my power of perception.

> *When we got older...he just became a total jerk. There was a period when there was no good. He was just mean. Plain mean. He would do really weird mind game kinds of things trying to convince me that I was a bad person and was to blame for everything. [For example], anytime anything bad happened, whether it was between my parents and me or between us, he'd pull me aside and say, "I hope you know, I'm writing down every terrible thing you've ever done and on your wedding day I'm going to stand up and read it to everybody, so that they know how bad you really are." I'd be searching his room for this book because I truly believed he had it and I wanted to destroy it.*
>
> *Another thing he would do, which was really weird, was when I was about 13 and he was 15, my parents would go out for the evening and he would start fights. I don't even know what the fights would be about, but he'd end up lying on me, on the ground, and I couldn't move. He'd hold me there and hold me there and I'd be crying and saying, "Please let me up. Just let me go back to my room. I'll leave you alone," but he would stay lying on me and he'd start talking, saying, "I'm holding you here until mom and dad come home because you are so bad and I'm going to tell them what you did. They're going to be so mad at you and you're going to get in so much trouble. You're going to be grounded forever." He'd just keep talking, and I'd start off thinking, "I didn't start the fight" but after a while I'd come to believe that I was to blame, so I'd apologize and beg to be let up so my parents wouldn't find out how bad I was. He'd keep me there for [what felt like] hours. However long it was until my parents came home. Then, as soon as we'd hear the key in the lock, he'd let me up and say, "Better get to your room and pretend you're asleep or I'm going to tell them everything." So I'd run to my room and avoid my parents, [thoroughly believing I had done something wrong]. Once he did that when my friend was visiting from out of town, and I remember her pulling on him and saying, "Let her up! Let her up!" and he just told her, "Get away from here. I'm not letting her up, so just go sit in her room."*

Although I reached a stage where I just completely tried to avoid him as much as possible, I also began to gain the insight I needed to fight back with my own verbal insults and put downs. However, this did not prove to be as satisfying as I had hoped it would be.

> *There was a big break there, from playing together as kids and then when I think of our adolescence, we didn't spend a lot of time together. [Our] interactions were just basically negative and [I] avoided him. [But I was also] more in tune with what would hurt him. When I was a kid, I would try to get back at him. I never started it but I wasn't a wimp that would just sit there and take it. I would try to say things that would hurt him back and it wouldn't work. But when I got older I could clue into things that would bug him. My awareness of being a teenager and what he'd be concerned about, because we were both in it and I knew the things that would bug me. Like those awkward phases, where he had acne and stuff. I would pick those [sensitive issues], and think, "It's time for me to get some pay back." So I would say [things to him] about not having a girlfriend or zits all over his face, really cruel kinds of things. [They did affect him], but I would feel terrible. I would be like, "I can't believe I just said that to him. How would I feel if he did that to me?" So I didn't do it that much.*

As we grew into the later stages of adolescence and young adulthood, our relationship began to improve, leading to a more positive, friendly relationship.

> *When he got to be about 18, we sort of made friends, but it was still a very precarious kind of relationship, where if you do anything wrong he'll get mad at you, so I had to make sure I was nice all the time. I remember me liking guys and asking him for advice and he'd say, "Well, I'll only give you advice if you give me a back rub." I'd have to sit there giving him a back rub to get my questions answered. So he's helping me but [getting something in return]. Then when he moved out, things got a lot better.*

It seemed that at that stage of our lives, we would pull together and be closer whenever there was some sort of crisis in our lives. This pattern seems to have continued to the present day, as our parents separated in 1999, which seemed to have a positive influence on our relationship.

> *When he was 19 or 20 he was dating this girl and they lived together. They had a very unhealthy relationship and in that period of time, we were actually really close. He was close to my parents then too and he would turn to all of us for help. So, it felt like, as [young] adults, if a crisis happened, we'd come together. Another time, about 5 years ago, he had a big blow out with my parents and my mom got mad that I wouldn't*

> *take her side and [my parents] started to ignore us. They didn't write. They didn't phone. They didn't do anything for about 6 months. So my brother and I were totally close. Which was weird. He was really there for me for a lot of stuff, but as soon as we made up with my parents, he was gone again. Then when my parents separated, we came back together again.*

I really enjoy having my brother as my friend during these times, as we can have a lot of fun together. It is odd that, despite the tremendous amount of fighting and negativity in our relationship, I feel as though I have a particularly strong bond with him. Thus, there is a part of my relationship with my brother that I treasure.

> *We can have a lot of fun... We still do jokes from childhood and we laugh and laugh. There's just something about us...we get together and there's just something about us that nobody else realizes. I don't even know how to explain it. When my parents split up, I was with my mom for a couple days and then [my brother and I] went for lunch with my dad. I hadn't seen [my dad] since my mom had moved out and everything, and neither had my brother. Even just sitting there, I mean, here we are, in this horrible situation, the first lunch with my dad when [my parents] aren't together anymore, and the two of us were...sitting beside each other and...telling our little jokes that other people don't quite get and...I don't know. I don't know how to describe it. It's just a bond. The sibling bond...*

However, it was disturbing to me that the closeness we shared was very tenuous, as it seemed that he could become angry and distance himself very quickly if I ever did anything that upset him.

> *[He can be] very moody. I could talk to him on the phone one day and he would be the greatest... We'd be laughing and joking and then the next week, some block is there. And when he's mad at you, he doesn't act mad. He just closes you off. He's just suddenly got a wall and you don't know if it's moodiness or something in his own life or something you did. He doesn't tell [you what's bothering him].*

This duality to our relationship was very difficult for me, causing many hurts and disappointments throughout my life, including during adulthood.

> *It is hurtful because when he isn't moody [and] weird, we have that bond. That's the way that he was to me always, really, very on and off, [acting] distant and indifferent. Indifference was very hurtful. I wanted this guy to be my buddy. I wanted that close kind of relationship and the indifference hurt a lot. Plus, there's so much of my life he*

> *hasn't been a part of. Him just not being there. I feel like he comes and goes but for most of it, he's distanced himself. So there's always been this sort of gaping hole [in my life].*

At a younger age, I would cope with the instability of our relationship by "walking on eggshells" around him, in an attempt to avoid doing anything that would lead to him distancing himself. However, as I matured, I began to develop more appropriate boundaries and realize that his moods were not my responsibility.

> *It was sort of like, when I'd first see him, say if I was going to do something with him on a [certain] day, I'd gauge his mood. And if he was in a good mood, then I could be me and just joke around [with him because] we could have a lot of fun when he wasn't in one of those moods. But if I saw him and he had a wall or seemed sort of perturbed in some way, then I would just sort of distance myself from him. Or he'd ask me to do things and I'd do them [just] to please him and not [make him angry].*
>
> *There was this one time when we were in Hawaii [on a family trip], when I was about 22. That's the first time I really ever started saying no to things that he wanted and really looking at him and seeing how he manipulated me. It was a whole family thing, where I was looking at everybody and seeing what my role in the family was and how I didn't like it. From that trip on, I told myself that I would change my [family] relationships because they were unhealthy and they weren't good for me. I needed to [start] looking after me. I think in certain ways that set him off sometimes. For example, he would call and say, "I want to come over with five of my guy friends and stay at your house this weekend." And I would say, "You know what, it's not a good weekend for me. So, no." He'd be mad and he'd ignore me for a while, until he got over it, but I had just reached a point in my own development where I could say, "It's okay if he's mad at me." But there was a definite point in my life where I had to make that happen.*

In addition to feeling as though my brother has missed out on large portions of my life, there are several other long-term negative effects that I feel came about in part because of the negativity in my sibling relationship. For example,

> *If I were to make a connection to me now, it takes a lot for me to trust someone. If they do one thing that makes me question their trust, it's like, "Okay, you know what, you don't get any." Trust is a huge issue for me. [Also], in terms of romantic relationships, I think that's where it sort of [had the most impact]. I think... if a person's chipping away at your self-esteem all the time, whether it's your parents or your brother or whoever, it's going to affect how you see yourself. I think when I was*

> *younger, for sure, that was an issue. Low self-esteem.*

In looking more deeply at these negative effects and the nature of our relationship over the years, I have also had to confront the question of whether his behaviour would be considered "abuse".

> *[My definition of abuse would be] anything that is intentionally done... with the intent of hurting the other person, whether it's physical or verbally saying something. If you have the intent to hurt them by saying that thing, then I think it is [abuse]. Although, I think the reaction of the other person matters too, because you could punch somebody and it could cause a mark and they don't care. They need to feel hurt by it or somehow damaged by it.*

> *I don't want to [call my brother's behaviour abusive]... It took me a long time to get there, but yeah, [it was abusive]. I honestly grew up thinking that everyone is like this. That there's nothing different between my brother and I and anybody else. And maybe there isn't...but [that doesn't make] it right, by any means. The way that I had to do it, to finally say, yeah, it was abuse, was that I had to imagine it was somebody else and I was watching them and if I was [watching someone else], there would be no question.*

In considering where this behaviour came from and who was to blame for it, I had to sift through much of my past. Although I realize that my brother has to be held responsible for his own behaviour, I also believe that a large part of the responsibility falls on my parents.

> *It's sort of convoluted in my mind because...in a way, I blame him...because he did it. But I also say that my parents had a job to do. I look back and I think, "Why didn't my parents stop him and why didn't they teach him differently?" Now that I'm older I can look back and look at the events over my whole family's life. I can see the escalations when he was really horrible are when things were really bad about family situations. They had a lot of financial problems and marital problems. It's not that they can control that bad things are happening in their lives, but the parenting role doesn't stop just because [you're having problems]. You still have a responsibility to your kids. But [for us], they were gone and we were left alone [to deal with it]. Either they were [physically] gone or they were just too preoccupied to notice what was going on. I remember my mom just being like, "I can't deal with this. There's too many things on my mind. You two just go deal with it." But I think they needed to play more of an active role. That's not parenting.*

Through these revelations, I have come to a place where I feel a lot of compassion for my brother and what he must have been going through in order to act out so negatively.

> *I feel bad for him, in certain ways. Like, what was going on with him that he had to do this as a little child? I think that the way his personality is... With the things that were going on with my family, I was very emotional and always very sensitive. If something bad [was] happening, I [was] going to cry over it and I yell[ed] about it and it was just there. For him, he was totally not [like that[. So what does he do with all that anger or fear or whatever [he's feeling]? It's like that whole [idea about the man getting yelled at by his boss and then] coming home and kick[ing] the dog sort of thing.*

I'm left with many wishes of the way I would have liked my family life to have been.

> *[If I was given a magic wand] I would change it completely. I would make us be friends [over our whole lives]. And [for] him, I just would have made him less needing of that power, somehow. Whatever it was that made him need that, I wish he could have had that satisfied in some other way, but that was up to my parents. It's up to them to find out what he was missing, [why] he needed to do that, and then [fill that need in some other way]. I wish my parents had taught him...even [when] he started doing that stuff. If they'd intervened early I think they could have saved a lot of it from happening. I would have wanted them to be more aware and I would have made them intervene. To do a definite intervention. They shouldn't have just made light of it, laughed at it. They minimized it. But they should have listened to me and believed me. They should not have joined in with him. That's just so damaging [when] one person is abusing another and two other people join in on it. They shouldn't have done that. They should have stopped it and not just told me to ignore it. That was completely wrong. They should have had way more control over the situation and [taught] proper conflict resolution.*

Through this process of examining my past and my development in such depth, I have also been able to identify some positive effects that came out of our relationship.

> *I learned to be more independent. I learned not to take crap from people. I've had boyfriends since, which, when I look back on it were very much like my brother, but I stood up to them. I didn't take whatever it was they were dishing out. [It was the same as] with him [when we were kids]. Even though he's way bigger, he'd punch me and I'd punch him back. I always had that sort of "I'm not going to take this from you" attitude, except for the really hurtful verbal stuff, which I didn't know how to deal*

> *with. But now, as an adult, I would [know how to deal with it]. I think I forced myself to learn that...because I'm not going to put up with that from anybody. [I just became stronger and developed] the attitude that no one talks to me like that anymore.*

Thus, I have come to many realizations by doing research on this topic. My studies in this area have also helped to open some dialogue between my brother and me, which I believe has helped us to deal with some of our past, and become somewhat closer. However, for the most part, my brother seems to be reluctant to really examine our past interactions very closely.

> *Before I started this [research project], I [thought], "My brother was a total jerk and he was wrong"...[but] as soon as I started really looking into it, I was like, "It wasn't him. It was my parents." It was way more my parents in my mind. When he first found out I was researching this, I remember...him just turning to me and going, "Why are you studying that?" and [being] shocked. I just told him it was an area I was interested in. Which was true. I didn't think [to study this] from him. I thought of it from friends and then once I was [involved] in it, I thought that I had to look at my own relationship. And then I was like, "Oh my God. He actually did do stuff to me."*
>
> *Since then, I've been trying to open a dialogue by saying, "I think you really need to read parts of my master's thesis, particularly my story," which is a very brief overview and doesn't go into a lot of detail, but in it I say that I don't blame him. That I blame my parents. I think it's important for him to read that and maybe if he does, he would be open to talking about it. So he's had the opportunity to read it, but [he hasn't]. I don't think he wants to acknowledge that he hurt me in any way that was lasting or damaging. I don't think he wants to go there. I do remember actually talking to him about some of the stuff he did, and he was sorry about it. Like holding me down on the ground. We talked about that one and he was like, "I wonder why I would do that?" I pointed out other things to him and he said, "Oh yeah, I remember doing that now." He doesn't seem to remember [a lot of what happened].*

In some of our discussions, he has even indicated having a sense of empathy and caring for me, which has been very surprising, as well as serving as a source of reassurance and comfort by knowing that he did love me.

> *One time he said, "I remember when we were little kids and you were so small. I remember getting in trouble from mom and dad, and just thinking that you were* *so* *small. And wondering how they could hurt you." We would stand beside each other with our little hands out [waiting to get hit with the wooden spoon]. He said he would look down and think, "How can you hit her, when she's so small?" That made me kind*

> *of sad actually, [although] I was glad that he had that empathy for me. But at the same time, then how come he could [hit me]?*

More recently, ever since our parents' separation, we seem to have drawn closer. Due to the on-again, off-again nature of our relationship in the past, I worry that this closeness will disappear at some point. However, I try to be optimistic, realizing that we are both growing and maturing, and perhaps have reached a point in our development where we can maintain a loving connection even if we do get angry at each other.

> *I'm hoping that now, whatever is going on now, stays. I've talked to him once a week for the last [while], which is so weird. We don't [normally] talk on the phone. We don't phone each other. We see each at other at Christmas for a day and he used to phone me for favors. But he'll phone now just to chat, and it's really weird. This divorce with my parents is just going to keep on going forever. There's always going to be something coming up for us to deal with, so it could be that now that that's severed, we will be closer. I don't know...*

On July 29th, 2000, my brother was married. I can't even describe the intense feelings I experienced as he stood waiting for his bride... a curious mixture of love, pride, protectiveness, and awe... I was completely overcome and tears flowed down my cheeks as I lifted my camera and tried to take a picture of him, trying to capture this moment and freeze it in my memory forever.

In the days that followed, while I was staying at my brother's apartment and before he left on his honeymoon, I experienced a closeness with him that I have not felt for a long time. I do not know if we have made such grand leaps because of the passage of time and the development of maturity, my parents' separation, or my own intense desire and effort to develop a closer relationship. All I know is that I like it. I like that every time I turned a corner in his apartment, he was there playing some sort of joke on me or holding out his hand to do the "brother/sister handshake" we developed when we were children. I like that we sat at his computer for hours playing video games that we remembered playing together as pre-teens. I like that he proudly introduced me to his friends at his wedding and wanted a picture of us displayed on a collage of photographs his fiancé and he had made of themselves for the entranceway to the wedding site. I like that he met my eyes, smiled shyly, and winked as I cried at his wedding, showing me that he understood.

I had the opportunity to discuss my research with him while I was visiting. I was stunned to hear him say that in his opinion, we were both cruel to each other, and that everything that he had done to me I had done in return. However, when I asked him to give me some examples of occasions when I had hurt or humiliated him, he could not remember a single one. He also could not remember the majority of the incidents that I relayed to him, times when I had felt hurt and betrayed by him. When I began to tell him my stories, my memories, his new wife making "tsk tsk" noises and comments about his treatment of me, he looked confused and startled, repeating over and over that he does not remember, and asking if I am sure that these things really happened.

> *He holds out his arms, pointing out scars here and there - scars from scratches I had given him. He holds on to the memory of that one scratching fight, holds on tight, because it is likely one of the few times that I had caused him personal injury. Perhaps this has caused him more pain and anguish than I think; perhaps this has created some sort of long-term damage that I am unaware of...perhaps I should ask him that one day.*

As time goes on, I fully expect that we will talk and revisit this issue again and again, shedding more light on the dynamics of our relationship over the years. But until that time comes, I am turning my attention elsewhere. Turning it to the experiences of my participants, to see if they, too, like my brother, believe that what occurred was mutual and inconsequential... Turning to them to hear their side of the story... Turning to them to try to see their side of things...

Jeremy's Story

Jeremy is a 26 year old, who grew up in a small town on the west coast of Canada with two younger brothers. He is 3 years older than Alex and 5 years older than Chad. He describes his family life in extremely positive terms, with much praise and love for his parents, as well as a sense of protectiveness towards his brothers from a very young age.

> *I have a really good family. My parents are my two best friends now. They're awesome. [They're] really, really good. I had a good childhood. I can honestly say, we grew up in a really good place. Mom and dad were awesome. For my dad, it has always been [that the] kids come first. He's the prototypical father that sacrifices absolutely everything for his kids. He sacrificed everything. I don't think I could have had a better father. He's awesome. Both my mom and dad [were like that]... [They] sacrificed a lot and put clothes on our backs and always supported whatever it was we wanted to do. [So], I can't complain about how I grew up.*
>
> *When we were younger, my mom and dad say when I was 6 and Alex was 3 or 4, I was really protective... Very, very tight with [my brothers]. I'd always take them everywhere. I'd carry them everywhere and I'd take them out [and] I'd always look out for [them].*

Despite his positive recollections of his relationships with his brothers, he states that "somewhere along the line that changed". Starting in early childhood, there was a great deal of conflict and "friction", particularly with Alex.

> *My dad said right from an early age you could see that there was going to be friction between us. I don't know what it was, [but] there was always friction. I've always gotten along with Chad. He was my little baby brother. He's still kind of like that. We usually always get along. [But with Alex], there was just so much friction between us. It was hard. We couldn't be in the same room together. We were just like this pack of three brothers that would just constantly argue and fight... because Alex and Chad fought just as much as I fought with Alex and Chad, like the three of us, so it was all the time. For years. All the time. We had a big backyard, [so] we'd be in the backyard and we'd be playing baseball or something and all of a sudden...[we'd be fighting]. There was no way we could play baseball together because we couldn't get along. We just constantly argued and we couldn't compromise and couldn't be happy. We couldn't have a conversation together without blowing up with each other.*

Although there was friction from a young age, Jeremy states that it began to get worse as they grew into adolescence, lasting for approximately ten years.

> *We got along when we were younger. We never fought as much, but it was when we both started to become teenagers. That was when it got bad. From the time Alex was about 11 or 12, and [then] we were like that for a good decade.*

As he was the oldest, Jeremy believes that he was the initiator of much of the conflict, largely because he felt responsible and somewhat parental towards his brothers.

> *I was pretty bad as the instigator. They'd be doing something and I'd be like, "You guys can't do that." I'm the older brother and I'm very responsible... I always have been. Even when we were 10 years old, I was really, really responsible. Mom and dad never put any pressure, but they'd always say, "Well, you are the oldest. You have to be a good example." I guess that's part of being the first born. So I always tried to be that to my brothers, but it backfired...*

In fact, his role of being responsible led to his brothers referring to him as "dad", which contributed to the friction between them. Jeremy states that although he has a great appreciation for his parents in his adult years, they did not always see eye to eye when they were growing up, as his father was somewhat strict and impatient with Jeremy and his brothers. This made the label of "dad" a negative one.

> *[If you were to talk to Alex, he'd say], "Jeremy tried to be the father figure" and yes, I did. I'll admit that. [So] Alex and Chad would call me "dad" all the time. I'd just be sitting there reading or watching TV and they'd come into the room and they'd be like, "Hey dad, how you doing?" I'd just [say], "Stop calling me that!" I got "dad" hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of times. It was horrible. I took that as an insult. Even though my dad was a super cool guy, the thing is that I never got along with my parents either. [My dad] was very strict. Like, this is the way it's gotta be done and if it's not done [that way], you're grounded... He would get mad. There was no iron fist, but I remember being smacked in the face a few times by my father. That pissed me off back then, but he would always come and apologize. And he spanked me. He smacked me in the ass. He did it to all of us. He smacked me on the cheek a couple of times and I'd have a red cheek, but I had it coming. He's mellowed [since then]. He's not as vocal and abrupt as he was back then.*

Jeremy also describes his dad as being impatient and quick-tempered, which he believes are characteristics that he has inherited or taken on himself.

> *...if [there's] anything that my dad and I have in common it's that we both have short fuses. He had an incredibly short fuse. Ten years ago...he'd go off...he'd get pissed [off] and lose it. He'd yell and always get mad at us. He was really, really bad. I think that really had a big effect on us kids because it wasn't militant, what we grew up in, [but] it was strict. If we didn't do this, then he'd smack us. Or give us a spanking. Which*

> *was fine but I think him always yelling at us, beating [his] way [through his frustrations], that was incorporated in all three of us. I think that was incorporated genetically.*
>
> *I got my short fuse from my dad. That was evident right from...God knows how old I was. I'm a very impatient person. Even to this day, I have no patience. With my brothers I had a short fuse and I had no patience. My fuse has grown a little bit longer, but I really need to work on my patience because I have absolutely zip. I've tried to change and it's coming, but it's hard.*

Jeremy describes the conflict that he experienced with his brothers as being both physical and verbal.

> *We fought a lot and it was more than just verbal interactions. We physically fought. Like each throwing fists. We never beat the crap out of each other, but I'd punch them, like a shot off the shoulder because [Alex] pissed me off. Instead of going back with him verbally or verbally tell[ing] him off, I'd just hit him. One thing that Alex never did was he never initiated physical fights. Alex has never been one to be the aggressor. I can't ever think of a time when he would ever punch me. So I always tended to initiate the physical aspects. [Both my brothers] would always use words and I wasn't one for words back then. I was one for, if you're going to lip me off then I'm gonna punch you. [So Alex] would piss me off and I [would be] really cruel. I'd hit him and then I'd run. Then I'd come [back] into the room and I'd say, "What happened? Why are you crying?" [Or] when I'd beat up my younger brother, he'd cry a lot and I'd start calling him names.*
>
> *There's a lot of things that I've done that I just...grisly memories, I guess you could say. So many times I've pounded or beaten on walls because I wanted to punch Alex in the head, but I couldn't punch him in the head. I'd never hit my brother that way. There's so many times he'd just get under my skin and my brothers, I think it's in all of us, we all have a bit of an ability to get under people's skin. We all do it really well. We just kept doing it and we didn't stop. I'm not saying it's a good quality, but it's a trait we all have. I remember us berating and berating each other and putting each other down.*

In addition, much of the interaction between Jeremy and Alex was characterized by indifference and immaturity, to the point where they even had difficulty in being civil to one another.

> *[There was] a lot of immature things...it was like we couldn't say hi at the end of the day. [We'd be] coming home from school and we couldn't say, "Hi. How is your day*

> *going?" It would be like, "Hi Dickhead. How are you?" kind of thing, and then just take off. And that hurt.*

Jeremy tells about one time when he came close to punching Alex, but was stopped by his mother getting in between the two of them.

> *One year, Alex and I both got brand new jean jackets. They were 125 bucks each. They were special. Mom and dad bought them for us. I was in grade 9 or 10, and Alex was in grade 8. He wore mine to school one day and it got stolen. He came home and he was scared. He was like, "Oh no, Jeremy's jacket was stolen and I know how much he really likes it." I remember walking in the house and he wouldn't tell me. My mom was right there 'cause she knew what happened and she was like, "I think Alex has to tell you something" and he wouldn't say it, so my mom goes, "Your jacket was stolen today at school." Right away I had my wallet in my hand and I chucked it right at him. I hit him in the head with it. Then I was just going to go and beat the crap out of him. [So] I threw him around and I went to charge him and mom got in the way and I ended up punching my fist through a wall instead. It's a good thing my mom really got in the way, because I didn't go after my brother after that. [But] if I hadn't gotten out of the way, I would have hit my mom. I felt really bad about that and I still do feel really bad about that one day.*

Jeremy relates much of his physical aggression to his impatience and inability to take the time to calm down.

> *I think that was a big thing, being impatient. I just could not spend the time to talk to them. I could not wait for my emotions to calm down. I just had to get it out and then I'd be fine. Then I could go do something else.*

There were other extra-familial situations that Jeremy describes, lasting up until the recent past, where his impatience and "short fuse" have led to aggressive behaviour.

> *I was like a time bomb about to go off. When I was younger, playing junior hockey, if I had no shoes [for example], I'd just go off like that (snaps fingers). I'd just become mad at people around. I think that's a lot like [what happened with] my brothers. I [got] in many, many fights. More as a kid, I'd get into fights. I think the last fight was a year and a half ago and I got my nose broken.*

Although he takes responsibility for initiating much of the negative interactions which occurred between him and his brothers, Jeremy also believes that the fighting was mutual, and that he never did anything to his brothers that they did not do in return.

> *It's not just me. He'd be the same way. We both would fight. Alex and I, we'd wrestle and fight and kick and punch, do whatever we did. I could put my life on it, the same things that I'm saying, he would say too. He might be a little more extreme [in describing] what I did. When we were younger, they hit me more, [but] because I was bigger, I could hurt them. I could punish them more, but they could give me mouth and tell me to fuck off or whatever. [Chad] would have to find something because he was a small kid, so whatever he could find [to fight back with] he'd throw at me. He hit me with a baseball bat one time. He threw a knife at me. I still got this scar and he almost cut this ear off.*

Jeremy's parents became extremely frustrated with the fighting that was going on, and attempted to intervene. However, they soon became too frustrated to deal with the conflict and often either separated the boys or sent Jeremy and his brothers off to settle their disputes on their own.

> *[My] mom and dad had to get into it all the time. I can remember countless times where I was sitting at the dinner table and my dad was obviously just sick of us arguing when we were having dinner, and he was like, "I'm trying to have dinner. Let's just have dinner as a family." He got to the point where he couldn't handle it anymore. He was just sick of getting in the middle and taking sides and stuff. Even at Christmastime, we were still fighting all the time. He would come into work and be like, "That god damned Jeremy. He picked another fight with his two younger brothers," and he'd just be so mad. He'd be fuming all day. [My] mom wouldn't do much. Sometimes she got involved, but it was more like my dad was the disciplinarian and it sort of went back to dad. My dad would...let things go for a while and then he'd be like, "Okay guys. Just stop. I can't do this anymore. I'm trying to watch TV," or "I want to do this and you guys, just get out of the house. Just go. If you want to beat the crap out of each other, just go out into the backyard," or "Go work it out on your own." 95% of the time he'd get right in there and say, "Stop you guys. You're not supposed to be doing this," and he'd yell at us, and "Jeremy go to your room. Just stay in your room." 99% of the time I got blamed for all of it. I guess 'cause I'm the oldest, I'm not supposed to be doing it. I'm supposed to be looking out for my younger brothers and stuff.*

Jeremy does not believe that any of the blame for the negativity of his interactions with his brothers can be placed on his parents, as they were always consistent and fair in their treatment of each of their three sons.

> *It was nothing my folks did to...push us toward...to fight with each other and ignore and yell and swear and be mad at each other.*

Instead, Jeremy attributes the blame to a number of other factors, such as basic personality differences between him and his brothers.

> *I'm into sports and competitive in sports and that's what I love to do. I get excited when I have a hockey game... All three of us played lacrosse together...and we all played...on the soccer team and we were all really competitive and really good at what we did, but I was the only one that played ice hockey. I've played hockey for about 20 years now and they never played, so we never had that [in common]. They've been a little more...rebellious and more adventurous. They like to booze it up and they like to party...and they always wanted to do that kind of stuff whereas [for] me, it was like, "I don't think I'm going to get drunk tonight because I have a big hockey game tomorrow," whereas they're like, "Piss on it. I'll just play...hungover." [So] I was a little bit more into sports and they never had that. They...never valued it and got more enjoyment out of lying around listening to music and stuff like that. They like their music... They're into arts and they like to read [and] they've always been closer because they both have similar lifestyles. They were so much alike that they stayed together. They got along. So there's a big difference there and I think that there was always friction there because of that.*
>
> *...[Alex and I] are very different people. Some of the arguments were that we were completely, exact opposites... as far as personality goes. He was...not very open with his emotions. He was never one for saying "I love you" kind of thing. I'm...more open. I like to talk and I have a little bit more warmth in my heart, I guess you could say. And he's a little bit more reserved and shy and I'm very outgoing. Incredibly outgoing. I'm a social butterfly. He doesn't have very many friends because of his personality and because he's very reserved. Like, he was social, but he was shy too. He had that large contrast. [So] he had a few friends and they...they just weren't the jock type. They were more like the outcast type. He loved to just hang out with people. He was 15 or 16. He'd stand at the 7-11, just stand there, and think he's all cool. Joe Cool. Or he'd go to a mall and hang out with people and be that social person. I could never understand wasting my time standing in front of a convenience store when I could go and play hockey... play football or baseball or any sporting activity. He just loved going to hang out at the coffee shop with all his friends and he'd buy coffee and just sit there drinking coffee and all this. I just can't imagine wasting my life that way. But he was happy.*
>
> *My aunt would...always just call him the black sheep, which he was. From about the age of 12 you could see [that he] just...he just changed. He didn't want to be with my*

> *mom and dad. He wouldn't go to the mall with my mom or my dad. I just couldn't understand that. I could never figure that out. I mean, they brought [him] into this world. They've done nothing but be good to [him]. I just think he just had to be that rebel. He did what he wanted to do when he wanted to do it. Even if he had to defy the rules with my parents. [I was] just a good kid whereas...[my brothers] aren't bad kids. They're good, but they're always getting into bad things and always giving my mom and dad more grey hairs than I've ever given them.*

In fact, these differences served as a source of further contention, as each brother would criticize the other for the way in which they were spending their time.

> *I'd always be out on my rollerblades playing hockey. I'd get all excited and my friends would be like, "Okay, well, we've got a big game in half an hour." I'd go get all my stuff and I'd be all excited because we were going to play hockey. I can't remember what Alex would say but he'd always say something like, "Oh yeah, whip-de-do. You're going to play hockey," [or] "Oh, big deal. You and your loser jock friends." [I'd tell him], "Alex, it's what I like. It's when I'm happy," and it didn't bug him. He'd just start going at it again. And then I'd just be like, "Okay. Then I can berate him." Battle back at him [and] put down whatever he liked to do.*

Jeremy also believes that many arguments began because his brothers would take his belongings without asking, which he considered to be extremely disrespectful.

> *One thing I have never done in my life to my brothers, is that I have never taken anything of theirs without asking. But, on the flip side, I've had things go missing - clothes, you name it, everything. They're always taking my stuff. When I was 15 I got my first job. Alex was only 12 at the time. So I've always had money and I've had more material things. He used to always take my clothes... I can think of countless times that [both my brothers] have taken my clothes and...ruined them on me. So that's a perfect opportunity to instigate a fight.*

There was also some feelings of disgust on Jeremy's part, as he felt that Alex and Chad were both highly intelligent and did not have to work as hard for their success as Jeremy did. He also believes that much of their talents were wasted, which led to more feelings of disdain.

> *Alex is really smart. It's sick. This has always pissed me off too because I know he's smart, and I have to work for my grades. I'm not a lazy student, but school comes harder for me. I'm not a great student, [but] I always worked hard and I always did my homework. My dad always said that Alex had somewhat like a photographic memory*

> *and he does, because he sees something once and he won't forget it. I think that pissed me off a lot too, because my dad's like, "Well, he's just got a photographic memory," and I [was] like, "Dad, I've got to read a book 4 times to understand it. He has to look at the page and he understands it." So, for me, I felt really let down. [My brothers] were too intelligent for their own good. That's how I see it. They were too smart and they thought they were too smart and they figured that they could get away with being that smart. And it worked for them. That pissed me off...because I had to work my ass off.*
>
> *I was always a little bit upset at [Alex] because he had no heart, no desire, no drive, no motivation, nothing. He just coasted. Even through life. I just think he was very immature. [And I may be] immature: immature but really responsible. He didn't care. He was just lazy. That's the thing. My brothers were very lazy, whereas me, I was like go, go, go, go, go, all the time. That pissed me off a lot too. They were just the laziest kids. Their rooms were always messy. My room was always neat and orderly. They'd leave crap everywhere. I'm not like that.*

Over time, Jeremy developed feelings of dislike and contempt for his brothers, feeling as though he were "superior" to them and wishing they shared more in common.

> *I have no idea why I never liked my brothers when I was young. Maybe it was just that difference in the fact that the two of them were alike and they got along well. I honestly felt superior to them. I wasn't as superior to them on an academic level, but on a physical level because I played sports and I was athletic. I wanted them to be more like me. But they didn't. I'd go out and play hockey or I'd go out and play baseball with my friends. Or I'd go out and play football, whereas they wouldn't. They'd never do it. I wish that they would have maybe conformed more, but they didn't and they wouldn't. At the time, I'd be kind of upset.*
>
> *I always had it in the back of my mind that...my brother's a stupid moron. Like, how could [he] act this way? I don't understand it. I wasn't always good and [I got into] my fair share of trouble, but I'd figure every now and then, "Chad, he's not going anywhere. He's a moron." [And Alex], I honestly believed he would never amount to anything. For years, I just kept going over it in my mind, just, like, "Forget it." I was just like, "I don't want to be friends with [him]. I don't want to." I remember being angry sometimes and just, "I can't wait until [he] moves out because I hate him." We basically hated each other. I couldn't stand looking at Alex. I was so happy when he wasn't in the house.*

In considering the effect that their interactions may have had on his brothers, Jeremy can see that his behaviour may have led to them feeling as though he did not care about them.

> *I can remember looking at Alex one time and he told me, "You don't care about me. You care about your friends more than you care about me." I remember him saying that a few times and I never really argued back with him. I just kind of let him say it [and] took it for what it was, and then I'd go out and do something with my friends. Or he's like, "If I was ever getting beat up by a bigger guy you'd never come in and stick up for me," and that's not true because nobody screws with my brothers.*
>
> *[Alex] was always...he had a bit of a wall. I can relate to that because I guess I probably put it there. I probably did it to him. I feel bad, but...*

As Jeremy became older, he began to question his relationship with his brothers, feeling as though there should be more closeness between them.

> *I've always loved Alex and I know we fought, but I always knew deep down that there was more to it than just beating the crap out of each other. There was more than that. I remember thinking, [I don't know] how many times, "We're brothers. We shouldn't be doing this." We're fighting and beating the crap out of...walls and we're hitting each other, and [I'd think that] this isn't normal brother things. I look at a lot of my friends. A good friend [of mine]...he's got a great relationship with his brother. I've got a couple friends that have really good relationships. Other friends always got along good and I always felt really bad because I didn't get along with my brother. [So] I'd always keep saying, "This isn't right. I don't...feel comfortable with this part of my life. I need to have more with my brother and I want to have more. I want to have a relationship and a good friendship with my brother. I always felt [that] but we'd always keep fighting still. So I didn't know where we were going.*

In an effort to form a stronger, friendlier relationship with Alex, Jeremy tried to spend time with him, but he was always rebuffed, which led to more feelings of hurt and animosity.

> *I remember that I tried... I tried to hang out with him and his friends and [it] never happened. I [was] like, "Well, Alex, why can't we hang out? Come on, I'll get you a beer. We'll go to the bar and I'll buy you a beer." And it never happened. [So] I always said, "Don't you want to hang out? Am I not cool or something? Am I not a cool, older brother?" I did this with him. [I asked], "Can I come along with you and your friends?" He won't deny that, because I did, but he'd never... I don't know what it is. [And] that just pissed me off. Pushed me away. I'm actually trying to make contact here, and...it never happened.*

Due to the high level of conflict between Jeremy and his brothers, as well as the fact that his efforts at forming a friendship seemed to be futile, Jeremy came to believe that he would never be able to have a close relationship with either Alex or Chad.

> *I thought for sure when we were older, [when] we settled down, got married and had kids, that we'd never ever communicate or get along. I was seriously...I thought we would never get along. I always thought there was going to be friction, always going to be fighting. For years, I just kept going over it in my mind, just like, "Forget it." Like, "Once we move out, we won't talk."*

As they got older, the level of conflict seemed to dissipate, which was more due to the fact that they were seeing less of each other and did not have the opportunity to fight as much.

> *I was becoming an adult and we weren't fighting as much, but we weren't seeing as much of each other, either. I was about 19 and we weren't fighting but we weren't talking... [So] the fighting tailed off, but we never communicated, we never got along. We just didn't see much of each other.*

However, there also seemed to be some gains made with regard to their ability to get along, which was shown to Jeremy through several incidents, such as family vacations and special events.

> *Not this past Christmas but the Christmas before, the folks took us to Las Vegas and California for two weeks. It was the first family trip. We've never really done that before other than, like, driving in the car for a week. I thought that on this trip I wouldn't have that much fun with my brothers. I was really nervous of going with my brothers. I was like, "I'm not going to have any fun with those guys." I mean, we've been with each other for our entire lives. We don't get along well. [But], from the second we were there we walked around the strip. We really got along well and kind of got to be stupid brothers and stuff and just hang out. I remember one day, the three of us, we just walked down the strip together in Las Vegas. We had so much fun. So that was really good. Really good for us. I think that was the turning point, as far as Alex and I getting along, 'cause I've always kind of gotten along with Chad.*
>
> *...my cousin's wedding. That was a funny story. Alex basically said the day after that I'd never get to see him in that state again. We all got pretty drunk and we had a good time. I think that was a big turning point too, where we all kind of bonded there a little bit.*

Their relationship was also strengthened by a family crisis involving a friend of Jeremy's, who had been living with his parents and ended up treating all of the family members poorly.

> *One of my best friends (Blake) lived with us for 3 years. His parents were going back to Europe and he didn't have any place to live, so my mom and dad took him in. He really started to treat my mom and dad with absolutely no respect and that's uncalled for because...my parents are awesome. I think this falling out [with Blake]... really helped out a lot with my brothers because...[Blake] was really mean to me too and my brothers felt for me. They felt really bad...*

Jeremy attributes many of these positive changes to a development of maturity for him and his brothers.

> *All of us were really progressing out of our...phase. Alex kind of grew up. Finally one day he just woke up and...finally grew up, I think. I had to really grow up too. I think...in the last few years I have kind of shifted my outlook on life quite a bit. I think it was just a matter of time for all three of us to grow as individuals, [to] where we knew that we would all get along. It just took time. I think the biggest thing is that it was just a progression for each individual personality in the family, finally to get to a certain point, where we can all get along. It would have been nice if it had been...when we were kids, but it didn't happen until I was in my 20s [because] we just...weren't ready really to be brothers yet. We weren't ready to get along.*

As time has passed, Jeremy has seen many positive changes in both Alex and Chad, and has reached a point where he can say that he loves and has pride for his brothers.

> *[Alex] has changed quite a bit now. He [is] a lot more affection[ate] with my folks...and they give him hugs and stuff. He told me he loved me once. That was just on the phone since I've moved [out] and he was like, "I love you. You're one of my friends..." And I [was] just, "Huh?" because he's not that emotional kind of guy. He's not. He won't tell you how he feels. In just the last couple of years, I think since he moved out, he start being that way with my parents and stuff.*
>
> *They're [both] very intelligent young men. Very smart. [Chad] is actually one of the most intelligent individuals I've ever spoken to. He's incredibly smart. They're both doing well. I'm really proud of my brothers [now] and really happy for them. I'm really happy...that I have brothers that I can be proud of now. I can tell people about my brother now and I can say, "He did this. He accomplished [whatever]..." [So] I have a*

> *lot of respect for him and I'm proud. I can honestly say I love them [both] a lot now.*

In looking back, Jeremy has many regrets about his relationship with his brothers.

> *There's a lot of regrets. When I look at it now, I think that...they wanted to do their thing. I was so focused on how I wanted to be...really, that was important [to me]. I may have been selfish, I guess, with regards to not respecting what my brothers wanted to do and how they wanted to grow up.*
>
> *[If I could], I'd change [the way things were]. I would have loved to be able to go out and say that my brothers are my best friends. I never did and I'd like to change that. I wish things could have been a little different... I think we could have...hung out and done more things together because...we never really have hung out. We've never been to a bar together. We've never sat down and had a beer. I'm 26 now and one would think that brothers would have done that by now and we've never done that.*
>
> *...if I could ever change something, that would be it...that I had never...hit him. I [would] just go and give him a big shot in the shoulder and he would be holding his shoulder for ten minutes because it was sore. Then he'd hit me back, but the fact of the matter, I initiated it. I try and think if I could have gotten rid of that, if I could go back and not do that and just...fight with him on a verbal level. So...there's a lot of things I regret.*

Despite his regrets, Jeremy believes that the way he treated his brothers was not ever extreme and never did any lasting damage.

> *...by no means has there ever been any damage done. Nothing's ever...[there isn't anything] we'll never be able to fix because...I just don't think there ever was anything that caused any damage. We never went to any extremes. I can think of a million things that brothers can do to each other and nothing we did was ever extreme. I think that we were extreme in the amount [of times we fought]...but not the things we did. The amount of times that we [fought] was enormous, but it was never...nothing that we ever did was bad. Nothing too...where you'd go off and lose your cool. It was just that we never quite got along. I know I never did anything to my brothers for them to ever hate me...to ever...seriously say that they hate me. I mean, they've said it, but I know that in their hearts, we're really, really tight.*

He also believes that conflict and friction between siblings is inevitable.

> *...there are probably a lot of brothers out there that despised each other, hated each*

> *other, more than I ever disapproved or disliked my brothers. Brothers aren't supposed to be friends. There are certain circumstances where [siblings] can really get along well. I know a lot of brothers who are tight from the get go...that's fine and dandy, but that's not the way it really works. You're gonna fight with your siblings. It's just the way it is. Kids are cruel. They are. I don't think I really was to my brothers, but in general, kids can be cruel to other kids. There's going to be confrontations...confrontations will always be a part of being [siblings]. That's my opinion. That's how it is. It's inevitable. By no means do I think that [siblings] are ever going to get along for their entire life. Never...perfectly in all harmony without there ever being any friction. I think there's always going to be fighting amongst brothers and sisters. [It's] always going to be there.*
>
> *If I have kids and they don't fight, then I know there's something wrong. I'm not saying I want my kids to fight, but I know it's going to be there. But I also don't want them to go through what my brothers and I went through and I will be adamant about it and I will be strict about it. I will..say, "Look, you guys, I've been through this..." I don't expect my kids to all be best friends, but I want them to at least respect one another and get along better than I did.*

In Jeremy's opinion, his brothers did not have any sort of lasting impact or developmental influence on him at all. However, he feels that as he has grown older and become closer to his brothers, he is beginning to allow them to influence him to a certain degree.

> *As far as [Alex] influencing me with how I turned out...he had absolutely no influence on me what-so-ever. I don't think [either of them] did. I just think this is what I have. This is what was put in front of me. This is what I wanted to do and I did it. [So] I don't think they influenced me much. I think they do more now though because we get along now, so if they say, "Why don't you try doing this?" I'm like, "Yeah, sounds good." [Alex] came to me one time and he asked me, "So how are things going with you and this girl [I was seeing]?" We can talk now. He's like, "Why don't you try doing this?" and I'm like, "Yeah. Yes. That's a good idea." It's good. I'm learning things from him now.*

In discussing his definition of "abuse", Jeremy states that he does not believe that any of the interactions that he had with his brothers could be considered to be abusive, largely because their negative interactions were mutual, but also because they never "crossed the line" to abuse.

> *I was never abused...my brothers have never been [either] mentally or physically*

> *abused. I believe [that] abuse [exists] and I believe that sort of violence [happens]. There are no real rules...but I respect that...line. I guess if my dad had ever hit me with a closed fist and given me a black eye or something. I just think physical abuse is more of like a beating, than discipline stuff. [With Alex], it never got to the point where I beat the crap out of [him]. If I had ever done that, if I ever had hit him in the face and broken his nose, I don't think we would be...where we are today. That would have done irreparable damage. [But] I never crossed the line. Never did. We fought, don't get me wrong. We bickered a lot. But we never crossed that line. We both talk about that, and he's like, "I could never punch you in the face." There were times that I wanted to, but I could never do it because [he's] my brother...and we're tight, because of that.*
>
> *I think verbal abuse is a lot of consistent...consistently being mean, I guess you could say. If you verbally abuse someone, you are basically getting in their kitchen. You are putting them down and making them feel like scum. I don't think I ever verbally abused my brothers. I mean, we verbally bashed each other and we verbally put each other down, but I don't think my brothers ever took a verbal abuse I may have given them, if you can call it verbal abuse, because we argued. They took it, but they gave it back. Never once did I ever say something to my brothers that upset them to the point where they'd cry or they'd be like, "I can't believe you said that." Other than the fact that maybe a few times that we both basically told each other that we hated each other and never wanted to see each other again. Some people may call it verbal abuse and hell, I might even be back at home one day and look back at this and think [that] at one time I was verbally abused. But, is it going to affect me [negatively]? No.*

Jeremy has had the opportunity to talk with Alex about their relationship and the fighting that went on when they were younger, and has even attempted to apologize for some of his behaviour and treatment of his brother.

> *...right before Christmas, I was talking to him on the phone and I said, "Alex...I'm up here in Edmonton. I have a lot more time to myself." I'm stuck in my bedroom all day, basically, and [I] sit on my computer and play [games]... and I said [to Alex], "I've got so much to think about," and just out of the blue, I said, "I really apologize for a lot of the things that I did as a kid. I'm sorry." I just said it and he was like, "You don't have to apologize. I know you feel bad and I feel bad too," and we just...connected. That one moment we had on the phone there, it was a really good moment for us. It was awesome. This was after we had already gone to Vegas at Christmas and started bonding and stuff.*

In their most recent interactions, it seems as though both Jeremy and Alex are making an attempt to become closer and have been taking the time to nurture their relationship.

> *I think we've really...made some incredible gains. We've talked a few times on the phone, and he started seeing things that I never thought he would admit to, like as far as like a brother and [on] an emotional level. There is still friction, we argue, but...things are pretty good and I'm really happy that things are getting better now. We're both trying.*
>
> *I went home at Christmas and Alex, he gave me a hug...and he was like, "How's it going? How's university?" We had a really good Christmas together too. He came over Christmas day and we sat back and had a few rum and eggnogs and stuff and had a good time. He came and had dinner and we talked...it was great. It was really good. We'd just hang out for hours and we talked and play[ed] video games and we got along. That had to be my best Christmas, by far my best Christmas. Even more so than being in Vegas and California for Christmas. I don't know what it is. I just had so much fun...it was awesome.*

Jeremy expressed a great deal of gratitude for the positive gains that have been made in his relationship with Alex, and he expressed hope that they will continue to become closer in the future.

> *Like I said, we don't have that kind of really tight brother[ly] relationship, but we are communicating now. Ten years down the road, we might be like that. But I'm just happy with where we are now. I'm happy to say where we are now is really improving. I don't know who to thank, but I'm really happy that I can say that I kept hoping for something and [it's starting to happen]. I'm just...in another world. I'm amazed that I can say that my brother and I have a friendship now because it was void for so long. And I'm happy...really happy...and I know he is too.*

Nancy's Story

Nancy, who is currently 21 years old, was the middle child between two brothers. Her older brother, Steve, was 18 months older than she, and Larry was 2 years younger. For much of the time, Nancy and her brothers would play together and seemed to get along quite well.

> *We didn't fight very much. Not that much. I played with [Larry] lots...he and I went and played outside...in his forts and...mostly we got along good. Most of the time...we just played and we were fine...*

However, Nancy states that fighting between them would occur, especially whenever they were confined in close quarters for any length of time or were forced to spend a great deal of time together, such as on summer holidays.

> *...we mostly just fought on long car trips. My older brother and I would gang up on my little brother. We'd put up pillows so he couldn't talk to us, 'cause he was a little kid so we would put up barriers so he couldn't play with us. We'd try and talk in front of him or something, like lean forward, and then he'd lean forward and we'd put our heads all the way [back], like lean back. He'd get really mad and everything. He'd get pouty and then he'd tell on us and we'd get in trouble.*
>
> *When we were little, on summer vacation, we'd yell [at one another] at some point in the day, every day. I don't know [for] how many years [that happened], but it was only when we were on vacation...because that was when we'd see each other a lot.*

She also describes conflict that occurred over trivial matters, such as toys or the television.

> *The worst thing we fought about was Lego. My older brother, he's an architect now, and you could tell when he was like, 5, that he was going to be one. He would make little Victorian mansions out of Lego and he took all the good pieces. So, every once in a while, [Larry and I would] have an "earthquake" and his house would fall down and we'd be throwing Lego around and stuff like that. Lego was pretty popular. Or a TV show to watch. That was a pretty popular one [to fight over]. The remote control.*
>
> *We had a sandbox, and [Steve] would pick up all the sand and build...actual houses out of it, like mansions... He would pick up all the good sand and pick up all the good pieces and we couldn't touch the sand that he'd used to make anything. He would push us out [of the sandbox]. It was ridiculous. Larry would get really frustrated by that and I think we would probably yell [at Steve] together. I just think it was stupid...pushing us out when we had more pieces for houses anyway. I'd be mad about that.*
>
> *Steve would always draw houses and make us look at them, like my parents and stuff, and then we'd be bored with it, so he'd yell at us for not caring about it, or something. Or he'd take the last cookie or something.*

Being the only female child, Nancy states that she was often in the position of joining with one brother in order to "gang up" on the other. However, she stated that in most cases, Larry was the one who was targeted as she and Steve believed that he was their parents' favourite.

> *I was always on the team side because I was the only girl, so it was either me and my little brother or me and my big brother, together. I would just...take sides with somebody.*
>
> *[The one that was ganged up on consistently was] mostly my little brother because my parents favoured him, so we'd get kind of mad over that. They would just give him whatever he wanted...video games or extra toys or whatever...special lunches he wanted and stuff like that just 'cause he was the baby. Even now, they send him cookies in the mail and stuff like that. He even knew it. When we got older...he'd totally use it and get what he wanted and he didn't even have to ask because he would get whatever, because he was the favourite. It really, really bothered us. [My parents] were obvious about it, [but] they'd be like, "No, we don't [favour him]." We'd have entire situations, like, once a week, where they did something like that [for him], but they'd just deny, deny, deny. Especially when I was a kid, it would really eat into me. They know that Steve and I think that they favoured Larry, but they don't think they do. They don't agree with us.*

Nancy states that sometimes she and Steve would use this to their advantage, using Larry's influence over their parents to earn privileges for themselves.

> *We didn't fight [about it] because we'd know to use it almost sort of to manipulate my parents. We'd get together to do stuff, like to plan things so that we'd get out of doing stuff, or we'd think, if we don't want to go someplace...stuff like that...[if] we didn't feel like it, we would get Larry on our side...because whatever he wanted he'd get, so if we...could catch him alone we could plan out a plan, [get out of what we were supposed to be doing], and then we would get to watch TV [instead]. My parents were...really old for parents, so just to get my mom [to allow us to do] kid things we had to...sort of manipulate him...but sometimes he wouldn't do what we asked.*

In addition to Larry being favoured by their parents, Nancy believes that Steve gained some privileges from being the oldest. Although she holds some bitterness towards him for this, she states that she also had some privileges for being the only female. Thus, parental attention seemed to equal out for her and Steve over the long run.

> *In a way, I think [Steve's] kind of selfish, so sometimes he got more [than I did]. Larry...got more because he was the baby but Steve got more because he really wanted more [and he's oldest so he felt entitled to it]... But I'm the only girl, so I got lots of stuff for that. I got to get braces, which was not a really great thing but I'm glad now, because my parents are really old fashioned and they thought that I had to have nice*

> *teeth if I wanted to get married so...I got to have braces. They do stuff like that, to make me pretty or whatever, but they didn't worry about that for [my brothers] because I was the girl. Steve...wanted to have braces too, and he still wants to get braces and he still is mad about that. [But] it's not like I asked for them or anything...*

Nancy states that when in conflict with her brothers, she was never the recipient of any negative behaviour, especially from Larry.

> *I never got picked on really, which was good. [Larry] never did anything mean to me, ever. Like, in my entire life. I can't think of anything. But my older brother was a bit more...confused. I can remember thinking that Steve was being mean to me sometimes, where he yelled at me. But Larry, he doesn't hurt anything, ever. He would only yell at us if he was really, really frustrated with us. But after he was 5 or 6 years [old], he never got that frustrated with us anymore. I think he could let it go better...*

Nancy attributes some of Larry's passive behaviour and acceptance of his siblings' treatment of him to an intense desire to be liked and to be friends with Nancy and Steve.

> *[Larry would] pout or tell on us or whatever, but then, as soon as we were nice to him again, he'd be happy. We could easily come back with him afterwards to play because he'd just be like, "Okay." Then we'd [be mean to him] again and he just wouldn't be mad at us.*

Most of the conflict that occurred between Nancy and her brothers was on a verbal level. In fact, she states that they did not ever fight physically with one another.

> *We never really fought [physically]...other than throwing Lego. It was verbal...we just yelled. Instead of fighting or hitting or anything, we would just yell. Sometimes we would call names or whatever. My mother would yell. She yelled a lot too, so I think we kind of picked it up from her. I think we had the idea that we could yell but we couldn't really be mean...which doesn't really make sense now. I think it was better for us because we didn't [physically] fight ever...we didn't ever hit or anything. So I think it's...the lesser of two evils or something. Now, I think [yelling is mean]. And [stuff like excluding Larry with the pillows]...that was mean too...*

Nancy believes that some of the conflict was helpful in relieving feelings of boredom or anger.

> *[Yelling] helped me to get rid of my frustration. [Or it would happen] because I was*

> *really bored...*

After arguing, Nancy would take some time to calm down. Then she would quickly return to her brothers to play with them once again.

> *We never fought bad enough that we were mad for even a whole hour. We'd have this big fight and yell and scream and then, later we'd be like, "Yeah, you want to go to the 7-11?" It was never anything really bad. I would just be a complete...like, really annoying or something, or [Steve] would be weird...[so] I would just wait out his mood...come back and everything would be fine. I'd go and read a book or something...go to my room...or go outside and be bored and come back and...everything's okay now. [So, it would split us up] only for an hour or whatever. Or a day if Larry really got mad.*

As the children grew into adolescence, the arguing seemed to become more frequent. However, she states that they still continued to make up quickly.

> *...when we got older, like in high school and stuff, every day, we'd have...we'd yell at each other and [afterward] we'd be like, "Okay whatever"... Now I think you would apologize to someone you'd yelled at...[but] we never, ever did.*

Nancy's parents would often intervene in their interactions, especially when they were notified by Larry that something was going on. Punishment was usually physical, in the form of spankings, as well as verbal.

> *I remember when we fought in the car. [My parents] would tell us to quit. We were usually more annoying than anything. They'd get really mad because we were being annoying, not just because we were picking on Larry. We'd be throwing [things] and then Larry would spill his coke or something and then they'd get mad and we'd all get a spanking when we got home. It never hurt or anything...[and] my mom would yell at us a bit. It was really harsh once. It wasn't for fighting. It was because I was supposed to be watching Larry, and I wasn't and he took out my dad's razor and he shaved the top layer of skin off his face. So I got in big trouble for that. Then one time I think I broke his ruler or something [and got in trouble]. Other than that, I didn't get caught for anything.*

Nancy also remembers that the yelling was not limited to her and her siblings, and that a great deal of yelling occurred throughout the household. This was quite distressing to her and at times, she tried to stop the yelling by playing the role of "referee" with various family members. In fact, if she could change anything about her past, this is the aspect that she would like to change the most.

> *...the worst thing was the yelling...it was ridiculous really. We'd be upstairs and [my mother] would be in the kitchen and she'd yell for us to come and yell for us to pick up our food and she'd yell for this and yell for stuff... Steve and my mother...they really yelled. They're mean. They're the fighters of the family. It was so annoying, because they both come to me a lot, "Oh, he did this," and "She did this to me." I would actually try to make Steve and Larry quit arguing when they would fight with each other...'cause they were yelling... [If I could change my past, it would be for there to] just not [be] so much yelling. [If I were to have my own kids one day], I'd want them to not yell as much.*

When considering Nancy's definition of abuse, she states that some of her behaviour could be called abusive. However, the situation is somewhat unclear to her, as she also believes that conflict between siblings is inevitable and is to be expected.

> *[Abuse would be]...I think in my mind I picture one person being far stronger or something like that, so it balances out...one weak individual and one that's more stronger or something. If it's two [equals], like brother and sister or two brothers, who are the same age and size, and they're fighting...it doesn't seem [like abuse]. It's normal.*
>
> *I don't really feel abused by [my brothers] at all, but I sort of did some things that may be abusive. I just don't...it didn't seem like...I didn't pick on Larry or anything so I didn't feel like I was abusing him. In terms of conflict and stuff like that, I think it was normal [for a] sibling relationship. I don't think that even Larry would think he was really abused. If you're family you can get away with a lot more than if you're not. It's okay if you're brothers. My boyfriend has two sisters and he said that they never even have any contact. They hardly even talk. He says that's the way things are and that seems weird [to me]...but [siblings are] supposed to do that. It just happens.*

Despite Larry being the target of much of the antics of Nancy and Steve, Nancy does not believe that it caused any harm or had any sort of negative impact on his development.

> *[If he were here], he'd say, "You guys were mean to me...because mom and dad loved me better." But he would say, "It wasn't really that bad..." I don't really think [it had any effects on him]. I don't really see how he would be shaped by [our treatment of him[.*

In considering the effects that she believes her sibling interactions may have had on her development, she is able to name quite a positive impact that her brothers had on her, as well as several learnings that have occurred from her experiences.

> *I wouldn't yell at [my brothers] now...[partly] because I don't get annoyed at things, [but I've also learned] that no one appreciates it and it's not really going to help anything either. I think [my brothers] influenced me socially because they were both so shy. In sports they were like, "Go first," to show them that it could be done or whatever. Even going out to parties and stuff. Steve never did that, and he's still shy. So I had to go first and get my parents to allow me to stay out later and things like that. Or even when we were little, I had to be first in line 'cause Steve didn't want to walk in front of me. Larry was just so quiet [too]. He never really liked to talk.*
>
> *Also, I think maybe [my brothers] influenced me to be nicer and want to talk and [be] more considerate 'cause...I don't know...just nicer. I guess because I don't like the way Steve [yelled and all that]. I didn't want to be like that to anybody [anymore]. So I think that they influenced me that way.*

In the present, Nancy and Steve have talked about their relationship and their childhood experiences. However, much of the same behaviour is still occurring, so not all of their feelings have been discussed as of yet.

> *Steve and I have talked about what we did and we even joke...we laugh at it. [But] we're not [completely] out in the open. We just got together a month ago. We don't yell as much, but it's still happening, like when I went home for Christmas. Which is sort of dumb. Steve's the same way as back when we were really young. We just come out and do stuff...play sports or whatever. He doesn't talk very much and he just... Larry and I, we just sit around and talk. He's still a little selfish or whatever and he annoys me, but we're still pretty much the same [as we used to be].*

Perhaps in the future Nancy will address these issues with her brothers once again...or maybe she will choose to leave them in the past. For now, she seems content to continue on as they have been...

Beth's Story

Beth, who is 23 years old, has a younger brother, named Duncan, who is 19. Overall, she and Duncan seemed to get along while they were growing up, although there seemed to be constant disagreements over "minor issues."

> *...we got along quite well...[and] did things together. [There was] nothing huge. Just little things all the time. It was never major things. It was always kind of minor things, like conflicts, squabbling, stuff like that. It was always just the same, these stupid little things...*

She attributes much of the dissension to the fact that her brother is very different from her, with these personality traits showing themselves from a very young age.

> *...we're kind of opposite. I'm kind of emotional, verbal, and my brother is very withdrawn and very...I don't want to use the word cold, but he's very non-emotional...[and] reserved. Just as a little kid...even when he was really young, that's just how he would be all the time. [He] never participated when he was really young. He just kind of observed and walked around with his hands in his pants. Just very prim and proper...*

These personality differences were most evident whenever a conflict or disagreement arose, at which point Beth and Duncan seemed to get entangled in a further conflict over the manner in which the original altercation should be handled.

> *My brother doesn't deal with conflict. He'll choose not to deal with things and that's kind of always where the conflict is. I'd want to talk about stuff and [for] my brother, [the conflict] doesn't exist. [So] I'd bring up things and want to talk about it or hash it out and my brother was kind of like...[just] not having [any part of] it. He would leave. He would go to his room. He would do something else or change topics. [Just] avoid...at all costs. That's how he deals with things, by just shutting down.*

Beth relates these personality differences to those of her parents, as she feels that she is very similar to their mother and that Duncan follows many of the same behavioural patterns as their father.

> *It seems like we kind of followed our parents that way because my father's very much like that and [Duncan] kind of followed the same tendencies. And then my mom...would cry or whatever and she wants to deal with things.*

These personality differences and preferences would often lead to a situation where Beth would badger and provoke Duncan, in an attempt to get him to address the conflict and work out whatever issue they were being confronted with. Since the conflict was usually over minor matters, she is not able to describe any particular reasons for these incidents occurring.

> *It would always be the same. It'd be something like...we would fight because he wouldn't answer me a lot of times. I'd ask him a question, just an innocent question or whatever, and he would just not respond. [He] wouldn't give me anything. I'd just be like, "Answer me. Answer me," and he'd be like, "I'm going to my room now," but he'd make a big production out of it...[where] I'd ask him a question, he'd say, "No. I'm going to my room..." and I'm like, "No, you're not going to your room," and then I'd follow him... He would lock the door and I'd [try and] come in. I don't know if he even wanted that because I think he'd make it seem like he wanted me to come in.*
>
> *It's really kind of a warped relationship. I don't know...'cause it was never anything in particular...[it was never any] big conflict. It was just little things and it was always the same. It would always be like...we'd start talking or we'd be doing something and I would start talking to him and he would just kind of shut down and I didn't think that was appropriate and I'd kind of start picking on him and following him and...he'd always try to leave. That's how things always were. He [would] either [go] outside or if he's outside with me he comes inside. If we're in the living room he goes to his room. He'd always leave. [He'd] get up and leave and I'd follow him and he wouldn't lock his door or he wouldn't run... It was just kind of that pattern. That's all I remember. I don't remember [any] antecedents or what caused it...*

This pattern would then lead into a cycle where Beth would continue to escalate her negative behaviour towards Duncan in an attempt to get some sort of emotional reaction

> *[I would] try to provoke him even more, if I needed to get a response out of him. [So I would] keep trying [to] get in his face and not leave him alone.*

She described her provocations as being completely verbal in nature, with no physical altercations occurring between her and her brother at any time.

> *[There was] never any kind of [physical] fighting. I would never do anything like that. I might have thrown something in his direction or something, but I'd never physically touch him or anything like that. [It was] verbal...name calling, picking on...verbal things like that [and it would] just progress. [I'd] start with a put down or something and maybe get a little more hurtful...*

> *I don't know what I picked on. Probably nothing in particular, just whatever came to mind...just for being kind of geeky...[and for being] kind of quiet and shy. [Duncan] was, at the time, very socially inept [and] really shy, so you could kind of target those things. He's really sensitive about those kinds of things. Also he's very competitive. He put a lot of pressure on himself for achieving grades, even at a very young age. And sports too. He was always very athletic, and so he put a lot of pressure on him[self] to achieve in those areas, so you know, [saying things] like, "You didn't play very well in the hockey game last night..." would probably be upsetting to him.*

This pattern would occur even when the conflict was started by Duncan.

> *He [would] start things too, and never want to finish them. He'd say something hurtful, or...call me names or something like that, and [I would react to it and then] I would be like, "Respond!" [but] he would be like, "Enough of that," and he'd [take] off. Just never follow through.*

Beth's attempts at eliciting a response were rarely successful, which resulted in further feelings of frustration and confusion for her. She is not certain of what she was looking for from Duncan at these times, and states that she simply provoked him in an attempt to see a more human, emotional side of him.

> *I think just because he went to his room...when he started shutting down I felt...I just couldn't understand that. I just can't understand how he could not want to deal with it or work out things or how he could start withdrawing. It just didn't make sense to me. I don't know what I was looking for, but something. It just seemed human [to show some sort of reaction]. It just seemed natural. So I always had to provoke him and get some kind of response because I didn't know how to deal with him not wanting to talk about things...*
>
> *You'd think saying stuff like [I said to him] would make him say something back [to] get me back, but it didn't, most of the time. It [was] infuriating that there's someone who you just don't get. You just don't understand what he's thinking or how he approaches things... It [just] made no sense [to me]. There [was] no response [from him] and he was in control. How can you react to that? You escalate...you kind of want him to react...but if he's calm and in control... It's just kind of frustrating. [Even when I'd follow him], he'd always be really calm and in control, and that was so irritating [and that would] get a rise out of me because the more he was in control, the more I was not [and]...I'd start to...yell...*

She states that his lack of emotion was troubling to her at times, as it didn't seem that he was having a "normal" human reaction to events in his life.

> *I...thought that nothing bothered him...thought he didn't have feelings. He was kind of non-emotional and that was almost disturbing, to see someone who's very...always seemingly in control.*

In addition to withdrawing, Duncan would also cope with Beth's provocations by telling their parents, which would often lead to her getting blamed for the conflict. Although she is confused by her parents' reaction, she feels that they defended him because they believed that he had certain personality traits that just needed to be accepted.

> *[He'd] get my parents involved. He'd be like, "Beth's bothering me. Make her stop." That's how conflict was usually resolved. It wasn't [that] we would deal with things. It was just...bring another party in, [which was] typical for him. It was usually my mom. My father wouldn't get involved or he'd try to redirect me into something else, like, "Let's go watch TV," or something. Try to refocus me on something else. So someone would...intervene [and] I'd probably get in trouble. Like, "Leave him alone." It seemed like, "You're older so you should know better." I could never understand that part because the blame always went on me. I'd always seemingly get in trouble, because he seemed very innocent... Kind of [like] picking sides. Seeing that [he was like our] dad, I guess [they] just respected that he's very proud and sensitive and just had to be accepted like that. They knew it was just characteristic of him.*

Although Beth does not feel as though there was any competition between Duncan and herself, she does feel that there may be some feelings of resentment over her being given more responsibility in the family.

> *We were always just very different. My parents were really good with that. I really felt that my parents did a great job of fostering our interests and supporting that. Really supporting us and encouraging us... My brother was really into...sports and stuff like that and I didn't know what to do with that. I was into music. We had different interests and we were good at different things. I was always good at writing and languages and stuff like that and my brother was always really good in math and sciences. Since we seemed to excel at different things, it was fine. And there was four years difference, so...there's a fair enough gap, that, even now, I never felt like there was ever any competition between us. It just seems like we had very separate lives [and] I think the male/female dynamics are a little different too. There just wasn't any competition. It would be worse if we had been maybe closer in age or [something] like that.*
>
> *I used to feel that...I was under too much responsibility. Just being the female...having*

> *household stuff to do...housecleaning and stuff like that. Even as we got older, the responsibilities that were placed on me at [a certain] age, when my brother reached that age, [those responsibilities] were never [expected of him]. My mom's very traditional [with] cooking and cleaning, and my brother was never put up to those expectations. [I also felt more responsibility because] I felt like I had to deal with things...if there was something wrong or something. He could always go do his own thing, go to his room, he could do whatever and I couldn't because I took the responsibility of dealing with the conflict, or a problem if there was a problem, or a situation. He could go and do his thing and I would have to be responsible. It seemed unfair that he could just [walk away from it]. It seemed like a cop out.*

In order to cope with this, Beth would often become angry and complain to her parents.

> *I'd get mad. He would never react...[so] I just gave up [and would] start complaining to my parents, and I'd say, "It's not fair," and that sort of ranting and raving to them. Then I'd get over it really quick. I seemed to blow, and then cry, [and then] I'd be fine and I'd stay like that. I'd get it all out and [be] fine. Just kind of rant and then, "Okay. I'm fine."*

She also questions whether there may be have been some feelings of jealousy for her as she was growing up, as she saw her brother as having a much easier life and as being somewhat revered by her parents. Part of this she attributes to her emotionality not matching her mother's image of having a "perfect" family.

> *Duncan was very pampered...and that still bothers me. He's up on a pedestal. [My mom] wouldn't [understand my position]. She'd have to protect him. [I'd] kind of want to knock him off the pegs, 'cause it's just...[he's like] the perfect child. I guess it just didn't seem fair. I guess maybe [my parents] showed a preference for my brother, but...I don't know. I never felt like I was less loved or I wasn't respected for what I was to them or anything like that. I just think that they played favourites... It seemed unfair... I didn't feel like I had to compete with my brother, [but] maybe I did. I don't know.*
>
> *My mom wanted [everything] to be happy and harmonious and stuff like that. Life's not like that, but she always had the idea that we're a big, happy family... [That] everything's fine and "Don't cause any commotion. Just leave him alone. He's fine and just respect that [he's the way he is]. Just don't start anything." [But] I didn't seem to care... I didn't really want to appear perfect. I probably complained more...like, "Things are tough," or "I don't like this." I was just more verbal about stuff. As opposed to my brother, who would just not say it. Like, [my mom would say], "How*

> *was your day?" [and he'd say,] "Oh, fine." [Whereas] I'd be like, "Well, this, this, this happened and..." [So] someone was saying, "Well, things aren't great. I'm not always happy. Things are tough," and that's [just not] the image that my parents were looking for.*
>
> *It seemed like everything was going great with my brother because he wasn't saying anything and he was fine. It just seems like everything was perfect [for him]. Things just seemed to come more difficult for me. Everything came to him really well. He seemed to be like the perfect child. He's good looking and athletic and seemed to be popular and have friends and he didn't seem to have all these other problems that, to me, seemed...like, everything seemed more difficult for me because he's just, he's managing and coping and everything's perfect. So I thought, "Well, that's completely unfair." Things weren't perfect [for him], but [at the time], he was coping so well that [it seemed like] his life was perfect. When you have a child who's high achieving in so many different ways... I mean, I always got good grades and played the piano and stuff like that, so it was countered in those areas, but I wasn't popular or...just not on the same [level as he was]. It just seemed like everything was so easy for him. I guess [I was] jealous, envious...things just came so easy for him... Things just looked...too good and I wanted that too.*

Beth also states that she felt rejected by her brother at times, as though he were ashamed of her. In addition, she feels as though he is somewhat critical and judgmental of her and the decisions she has made in her life.

> *I think he thought I was annoying and...embarrassing... If he had friends over and stuff like that, I'd want to, I don't know, talk to them or be around, but it was like, "No. Go away." He just didn't want to have much of anything to do with me. I feel like he's very...like, he judges. I don't know if he judges but...he's kind of like an outsider, where he upholds everything you do... He never says anything, but he's always questioned my choices or what I'm doing, 'cause it's so opposite of what he does.*

If she could change her past in any way, there are several changes Beth would make with regard to her relationship with her brother, as well as the way in which her parents handled the conflict they experienced with one another.

> *[If I could change anything, I would make us] be closer. I rarely talk to my brother in any kind of open [way]...like [by] sharing things [with one another]. We rarely talk about our personal lives or relationships or how we're feeling and stuff like that. I don't talk to him [openly], even to this day. I have not talked about those things with him [or] shared intimate details of my life. We just don't. We'll talk about sports. We'll talk about movies, TV, kind of superficial types of things but we can't talk about really*

> *intimate things and we never really have. It would really be nice to have a sibling that you had that really close relationship. We're close in some ways and I know if I need him he's there...but [I] have friends who have older sisters and there's just that bond that I felt like I never had with my brother.*
>
> *[I wish my parents had] not said it's okay how my brother [deals with conflict] and [his] coping style. [For them], acting like that was an okay way of dealing with these kinds of emotions and stuff like that and [they would be] jumping in all the time and solving problems that came up. I think you can't always make everything perfect... [and I think parents need to] empower [their kids] to deal with [conflict] themselves and communicate and talk. [If I have kids one day, I would] make them deal with it [themselves]. I don't know how you could [do that], [but] I think it's important for people to be able to deal with [conflict] and be able to have personal skills, like [in] dealing with problems and conflicts and talking openly and sharing. Communication is really essential. I don't know how you foster that, but I think [it's important to] not jump in and solve all your kids' problems. I don't agree with that. [I would say,] "You need to work it out," as opposed to jumping in and solving their problems.*

Thus, Beth has learned a great deal from her interactions with her brother.

> *[I learned that] when you have problems that you have to talk about them and [I learned] how essential it is just to vent to [some]body and share [your feelings] and just be really honest about them because...when bad things are happening, I can't deal with them on my own. I can't internalize them. I can't act like they're not happening because...it's just not healthy. [So, my relationship with my brother] has reaffirmed how important it is just to...be more open and to talk about things. I really think how [Duncan] deals with things is very unhealthy and my father [is like that] too. So, I don't want to do that and I think that's a good thing.*

In discussing her own definition of abuse, Beth states that many of the interactions that she had with Duncan would be considered to be abusive. She also believes that she was abused in certain ways as well, through Duncan's neglect and indifference towards her.

> *...[my] definition of abuse...I guess [is] when something affects your sense of self...[your] self esteem. [For us,] it was never physical abuse. If anything it would be emotional. Mental kinds of abuse. On a continuum from nothing to 10...[it would be] probably like [a] 4 or 5 for emotional [abuse] because it was cruel. I think saying those kinds of hurtful things lasts a lot longer than just punching or something, 'cause that goes away but when you have those kinds of [feelings], resentment or [other] feelings, they last a lot longer. But at the time I thought that to be okay, because he just seemed...quite self-confident, very together, and I was the one...I felt that I had [more*

> *of] those issues [than him] because [he] had that self-confidence [and it seemed that] everything was perfect, everything was fine...[Now I know that the way I treated him hurt him], because he's very...he's really sensitive. I didn't think that at the time. I just thought he was very cold and unfeeling and I probably said stuff that was really hurtful and I know it affected him, he just wasn't dealing with it and I didn't see it [hurting him] so I just assumed that if you didn't show it, then you're just not feeling it...*
>
> *[His lack of response towards me], that's abuse...[or] neglect. The fact that he wasn't doing anything. He didn't pick on me or do anything [concrete], there just wasn't that kind of relationship I thought siblings should have. [Having that feeling of loss and feeling] that I should have something that I'd feel like I'm not getting. Yeah, that neglect would be abuse.*

In the present, the relationship between Beth and Duncan has improved, despite the fact that Duncan has continued to display many of the same behavioural tendencies as when they were younger. In large part, Beth attributes any positive changes to her ability to accept him as he is.

> *[Our relationship] has gotten better. Since...I think when he got out of high school, it's [been] better and we can just kind of understand each other a little bit more and I accept him [more now]. That's how he is. That's how I am...and [we] just accept that. He will do the littlest thing and I think it's huge. Like him saying thank-you, it's such a huge thing for me. Just to acknowledge [something]. It seems really lame. I'll always say thank-you and things like that, but for my brother to say thank-you or ask for my help means a lot because I know that doesn't come natural for him to say those kinds of things or give a compliment or something like that. [So] it just means so much.*
>
> *He [does have] the same kind of tendencies [as when we were younger]. Maybe not to the [same] extreme, but [he's] still very [avoidant]. It's a good relationship [now]. We get along and we can go to movies and do stuff together and it's nice, but still frustrating because...he just thinks nothing's ever wrong or everything's perfect all the time and he's kind of aloof to a lot of things. He's just frustrating. We don't ever blow up [now]...[there's] never name-calling or anything like that. But it's the same thing... There's still problems, and he just...I guess he's just more in denial now. It's the same thing, like "There's nothing wrong," and he chooses not to deal with things.*

Over the years, Beth has come to realize that Duncan does have feelings and has experienced difficulties in his life. She has also realized that his tendency to avoid conflict and negativity has resulted in some negative effects for him, such as stress related health problems.

> *I don't think it's really healthy, that he's developed this kind of avoiding [of] conflict or denying things because I see problems now. He just kind of is pushing [things] away and not doing anything constructive or healthy. I know things do affect him. For so long I thought he just wasn't affected by anything, but I know that things upset him and he gets...like, he cares. He just really internalizes it. For a while I thought he didn't feel stress...but he gets ulcers and stuff like that, so I know he internalizes all those things and he does have the same kinds of problems. He just doesn't verbalize them. I think that's a bit unhealthy, personally, because he makes himself sick by taking on all this stuff and not dealing with [it]. I've kind of come to realize that...he does feel. He does have emotion. He just deals with [feelings] differently: I still don't understand it. I don't understand... I respect it...when [he] acts like that. I know he's doing it, but I don't think it's a good thing.*

In addition, his indifference and avoidant behaviour seems to have instilled a feeling of hopelessness in Beth, ~~as~~ she is unsure if they will ever be able to build a close relationship.

> *I have regrets that we don't have that close relationship. I think it could be better. I would really like to have a close relationship with him, but...it just doesn't seem like that's an option. I foresee in the future that we'll still be close, but we'll never have that...kind of intimate relationship.*

Although the lack of a close relationship seems to be disappointing to Beth, she has also reached a point of resolution, as this is how it has always been and she has assumed that this is how it would be in the future.

> *It's weird to think about it now. I've never...I don't know. I just never think about it. It's really weird because you just take [your sibling relationship] for granted. That's the way it was. It seems like that's who he is, that's the way I am, and I've just kind of come to accept that. He's been that way since we were young. It's better now...he talks a little bit more and he's a little bit more open, but I can't see that changing [much more in the future].*

Thus, at this point she seems content to have established a level of closeness that she and Duncan did not previously share, leaving the future to unfold as it may...

Sandy's Story

Sandy grew up in a small, prairie town with two sisters. Her older sister, Maureen, was adopted and is 8 years older. There is only 18 months between Sandy and her younger sister, Karen. Although there was very little conflict between Sandy and her older sister, she reports that Karen and her were "constantly" arguing with one another, especially when they were very young.

> *[Maureen] and I, she was so much older it was a bit distant. [But Karen] and I fought constantly. We were really close [in age] and really similar in so many ways, [we were] just constantly fighting. When we were younger, [it happened] daily, definitely. We'd get along great for about an hour, and then it would start to deteriorate...*

Sandy attributes much of the conflict to the fact that they had to share a bedroom. Conflict would also arise due to the amount of time they spent together and the similarities between them.

> *When we were younger it was just really tense because we shared a bedroom... I was messy and she wasn't...[so] there was lots of conflict over that. In our room we had to keep everything separate to keep us happy. We each had a bed but they were on the edges of the room [and] we had the dressers in the middle separating them. When it got bad [my parents] were thinking about putting up a wall in the middle of the room. We just sort of kept to our own side. Each side looked totally different too. They tried to keep it like two different rooms but it didn't work. [So there was] a lot of "my side of the room" or "my side of the car."*
>
> *Being really close in age we were often...called twins. We both had long blond hair...[we're] close in age, but not twins. [My parents] always just treated [Karen] and I as being the same age. That was all right. It was just kind of, "You two girls" and then Maureen. That's how it always was. We were just too much the same. Everything was...we had the same clothes and everything. It just didn't work. [Plus] both our parents are teachers so my mom would take us to school and they're at the school and [they'd] bring us home from school, so the two of us were always together. We never had time apart.*

In some ways, the level of closeness was a positive part of their sibling relationship, especially with regard to being in the same school with one another.

> *...she was just a grade behind me in school, so that was always kind of cool having her*

> *right there. It was a really small town school, so all the people in my class were really good friends with the people in her class and we always had the same group of friends, so it was alright, except for the time when we both had a crush on the same boy. That didn't go over well... But it was really cool, actually. It worked out for us. When we were younger we were actually in different schools for a couple of years, and that was okay, but it was better when we were closer together because there's that support. If something's wrong, she was just down the hall. So it was good that way.*

She can also recall several positive interactions between her and Karen. For example,

> *I remember one really good day. We were playing basketball in the driveway. Dad had just put up a hoop, and [Maureen] was on the high school team, so she was shooting, showing off all her stuff. [Karen] and I were watching her in awe, just "Oh, she's so good," and then she flubbed it up so we finally had our shot at it. We were so short, we couldn't even get [the ball] close [to the net], so finally I picked [Karen] up and boosted her up and she shot it in the basket. It was this whole teamwork thing. My parents were watching out the window and they just started cheering and we didn't realize that they were even watching. And that was...it was so great 'cause they were just laughing so hard. It must have been so cute, both of us helping each other...*

When conflict did occur, Sandy states that it was often she who initiated it, as she was older and tended to be "bossy".

> *...usually [there was] fighting over toys. "I want to play with this." "[No], I want to play with this." Or one of us would try to get bossy with the other one and then the other one would just [say], "Forget it. You're not allowed to do that." [Typically], I would [start it]. I was the bossy one, so she would often get sick of that and that's when it would often start. [But] I felt like I was the mom and the boss over her and sometimes she felt like I was too. And that wouldn't work out... [If she were here, she would say] that we would fight and [that] I was bossy as a kid, [but] I was just older and I figured that I should decide what we would play and then, always I had to have this Barbie and this Barbie and I just had to be the one that was always in charge, with whatever it was, and she'd often get really mad, but that was really [my] goal [anyway].*

The conflict that occurred was both verbal and physical in nature.

> *[There was] a lot of verbal. I'd call her a "stupid head," you know, nothing serious. Just name calling. Arguing over whose side it was. A lot of just getting into the heat of it and all the rest. Lots of fighting about [territory]. We knew how to push each other's buttons exactly... [And then] when it got really [heated]...like, verbal sometimes*

> *[became] physical. We both had long hair and I just remember fighting each other and pulling [each other's] hair... [There was] lots of hair pulling. [And] I remember her biting me once.*

Sandy also states that she would often be angered by some of Karen's actions, which she believed were done on purpose to irritate her.

> *She knows exactly how to drive me up the wall and get on my [nerves]. [For example], she knows it drives me nuts when the laundry stays in the dryer, because then it starts to get wrinkly. So she intentionally just leaves it in the dryer, just to make me mad. So I started just throwing my wet clothes in with hers that were in the dryer and that really got her mad. Just little things like that. She knows it drives me nuts when she changes the screen saver on our computer, so she does that constantly... Now it's funny stuff, but before it was...we knew exactly who wanted to put what dress on what Barbie, so [the dress] was intentionally at the bottom of the basket or on another [Barbie]...*

Although there was a high level of competition between Sandy and Karen, Sandy does not feel that her parents displayed any favouritism between the two of them.

> *Everything had to be really equal with us because if somebody got a bigger birthday present or a bigger Christmas present, oh there'd be a real problem. So as long as everything was equal and everybody had their own space, it was good. [There was] big time [competition between] [Karen] and I. It didn't seem that there was ever favouritism, because we were so close in age. [Actually], I always felt that my dad favoured my older sister, but she was adopted through his first marriage and this sort of stuff...*

Sandy believes that her parents did a good job in appropriately dealing with the conflict that occurred between her and her sister, and intervened whenever it began to escalate to too high a level.

> *I thought it was great the way [my parents handled the conflict]. Dad was generally the nice guy and mom was generally the referee between [Karen] and I, except for when it got really bad. Then dad would get in there and then really when he did, he'd spaz. When they started hearing [us fighting], it was, "Girls, quit it," but...if it was too bad we'd get a spanking. [There was] a lot of, "Go to your room," or separat[ing] us. We had two bathrooms in the house so they'd often send us... "You go to this bathroom. You go to this bathroom." That irked us because we didn't have anything to*

> *play with in the bathroom. So [there was] a lot of segregation [or] "You're not allowed to play with this for a while." Basically it was just centered on whatever it was [we were fighting about]. Like, if we were fighting over the Barbies, "You're not allowed to play with the Barbies for the rest of the day." Stuff like that. If it got really bad, if we were fighting and stuff, then they would have a problem with that, [so] there was a lot of quiet fighting [because] sometimes when mom and dad heard it we would get in trouble, so we kind of had an agreement to keep it low so that they wouldn't find out that we were fighting.*

Sandy and Karen were able to use their unspoken agreement to keep their fighting a secret from the parents as a way to "bond" and become closer. In addition, they became closer to one another through their interactions with Maureen.

> *...we had this big fight over who was playing with what doll and we ended up [fighting] and in the fight...the doll lost its head. I don't know how it lost its head. I don't know if somebody dropped it on the ground and it went rolling or [if it] just kind of [happened] in the kerfuffle...but all of a sudden it was like, "Oh, the doll. It's broken now so none of us can play with it." So that was a big thing for us, [because we were always told], "If you fight, things might get broken and then you'll miss playing with it." That was a big one when we kind of stopped and just hid it from my parents... [We did that] a lot when we were fighting. Really they knew it was going on... We [would] just kind of [go], "Shh!" and [pretend like] they're never going to find out. They knew what we were doing, but it kind of became almost a bonding thing too because then we'd start giggling and we wanted to hide it and all this sort of stuff...*
>
> *...we always thought [Maureen] was the coolest when all her friends were over...so we'd often bond together, like, if we were trying to spy on her and her boyfriend in the basement... The three of us didn't spend much time together, but it was kind of cool when she was over with her friends. We had some really cool conversations.*

As Sandy and Karen grew into adolescence, their relationship began to improve, due to several different factors, such as getting their own bedrooms and fostering their own interests.

> *[Karen] and I, we fought until we were about 10. I guess I was 12 and she was 10, and then as we just kind of got older it [got better]. We just became best friends because, I don't know, we just had so much in common...always playing basketball in the driveway and doing all sorts of stuff [together,*
>
> *...when we moved into different bedrooms when [Maureen] moved out, that's mostly when [the fighting] stopped. That was when we started getting along a lot better. As*

> *soon as we were in different rooms it was a lot better because we each had our own space and our time and place apart from each other. [Maureen] moved out...and went off to college and I guess it was a little different because all of a sudden there was a lot more parent attention and we had separate rooms and we just started to build our different personalities.*
>
> *When we got up into high school we started to see some differences. She was very, very athletic... We played on the same teams but she was always the big star, but I started getting into student leadership stuff, so I was kind of the student vice-president and she was the big athlete star. We were both really good at music and stuff too, so we had that together, but we started to build our individual differences, and it was good that they were different from each other. So she started to foster that and I started to foster the leadership thing... [So], we managed to learn our differences and go our own direction. [That helped our relationship a lot] 'cause if we were both good at the same things, then we'd be directly competing but when we started to take on different things it was better and we encouraged each other and that kind of thing.*

In addition, Sandy believes that her parents may have learned how to deal more appropriately with their children after raising Maureen, which may have made them more effective in their interactions with Sandy and Karen.

> *With my mom [and Maureen] it was just really different because my mother wasn't her natural mother or her adopted mother. She moved in when Maureen was about 5, so it got into the teen years, where there was just a little bit of tension. I just remember a couple arguments, like, "You're not my real mother," and things like that. As teenagers, I thought my parents handled us a lot better than they handled her because...I don't know... I don't know how they kind of got it right with us 'cause there was never any yelling or conflict [between them and] us as teenagers. But there was a lot more with her, so I'm glad they fixed that, whatever they did. I just remember a lot more conflict with [Maureen] when she was a teenager. [There was] a lot of fighting. [Karen] and I would hear [them] fighting...I don't know if that encouraged us to be more well behaved as teenagers, but...it got better [for us].*

Although their relationship had drastically improved in their teen years, Sandy states that from time to time there was still some conflict.

> *I can think of one [fight] in particular. It was an argument over who was doing what chores. We'd have our weekly schedule, and one week one would clear off the table and one would load the dishwasher, and we'd swap. We got in this big argument over who was supposed to be doing what. I remember I was unloading the dishwasher and she was busy, yapping at me, and I rushed out of the room and I actually had a spoon*

> *and I just threw the spoon and it actually got wedged in the wall and my parents weren't too happy about that. We'd keep our distances, when we were fighting as teenagers, [because] stuff would start throwing. I can remember an orange...that splattered... We wouldn't get too close. We'd just start yelling and screaming. There was a lot of screaming and then we'd start throwing things. That's...how the situation would happen.*

In order to cope with these arguments, Sandy and Karen would simply take some time to calm down.

> *[To resolve an argument], one of us would leave. Generally, [we'd] just take some time apart. We never really apologized to each other. It was just, after a while, we'd get over it and then we'd be back together again. We were so close and living in [such] close quarters that we'd just get over it.*

Sandy does not believe that there were any long lasting effects of their fighting, nor does she believe that anybody was every really hurt through her interactions with her sister.

> *[There may have been] a little bit of bitterness. I wouldn't say hurt feelings, [more like] "Mom, she isn't doing her chores." The fighting was just there. We got over it. It was never anything too major. It was more important for us to get along. I wouldn't say there was any negative lasting effects. Nothing serious lasting... Nothing that lasted more than a couple of hours. You know, a bruise here and there, but nothing serious. [And there was] nothing [verbal] that had a lasting effect. [We] never, ever swore at each other. That was one thing. Never, ever did her or I. It was just name calling. That's all there was. Never swearing or anything. We never did.*

Sandy and Karen were able to bond together even further through an incident that occurred when Maureen began to look for her birth parents.

> *...when I was graduating grade 12, [Maureen] was getting married and she actually went and researched and found her birth mother. She found out that she had three natural half brothers and [Karen] and I didn't like that at all because she was our sister, not anyone else's. We never, ever thought of her as being adopted, but then it was kind of...we had to think of her as being different... She has dark hair and eyes and we were blond and had blue eyes, so everybody knew [she] was different, but...it was just a lot different when all of a sudden she had her own brothers. [Karen] and I got really threatened because...all of a sudden [Maureen] was a different person. But she doesn't see them very much and all that sort of stuff, so we kind of got over it, but when she first announced that she also had these three half brothers, and this whole*

> *other family, it was kind of tough on us. It was good for her because she wanted to know a little bit more about where she fits in with all this stuff, but I just remember [Karen] and I sat there and had a really long talk about stuff that night and...bonded together...*

Although Sandy seems quite pleased with the quality of her sibling relationship, she would make a few changes in her past if she were given the opportunity.

> *I would have had [Karen and I] in separate rooms because as soon as we were in different rooms it was a lot better. So that's what I'd change. [If I have my own kids one day], I would hope that they have a relationship like [Karen] and I do, [but] hopefully get over the conflicts of the younger years earlier. And [just] try to develop a good relationship, like [Karen] and I have [now]. [So] I'd give them separate rooms and try and help them learn their differences and [foster] their differences. That worked for [us]. Once we found out about our differences we got along better. I'd [also] want [my kids] to be closer in age than [Maureen] and I.*

In considering her definition of abuse, Sandy states that she does not consider the behaviour she engaged in with Karen to be abusive. In fact, she said that she believes conflict to be a natural and inevitable aspect of the sibling relationship.

> *I would classify abuse as something that has a lasting effect, whatever it might be. Something that seriously leaves an emotional lasting effect. For some people it might be verbal things or it might be this [sort of thing I'm describing], but that wouldn't leave a lasting effect on me and I always think of it as normal, or just kind of...that's what it was for us, [normal]. I just think of it as part of [being siblings]. It happens. Just a little bit of conflict, little bit of fighting, and that was just our way of fighting. A little bit of yelling. A little bit of hair pulling. We had long hair. [That's] just the way it worked. [Siblings] can't always get along. You are going to have conflicts and everything, and you can yell at each other and a little bit of [that]...I think that stuff is...almost natural in my opinion. Like, a little bit of aggression. Not too big of a deal.*
>
> *If [I] just saw two friends sitting there pulling each other's hair, it would probably be, "Whoa." But siblings, I think...I don't know why, but they just do get away with more and it's expected... It's almost expected that they're going to get yelled at and there's going to be a little bit of fighting and conflict. At least, in my opinion.*

She is also able to identify some positives that came out of her conflict with Karen, such as things she learned over the years.

> *[I] just learned how to get along better...because [Karen and I] knew how to push each other's buttons, but we also knew how to make each other happy, and that was good. [And just how to] get along better with people in general.*

Thus, Sandy has come to terms with the conflict in her relationship, believing it to have simply been a part of the way that siblings naturally behave with one another. She has also had the opportunity to discuss these issues with Karen and it seems that they both have similar attitudes with regard to their previous interactions. They also seem to have developed a deep friendship and have become very close over the years.

> *Right now, she goes to [another university in another city] and we talk 2 or 3 times a week. It's great. We talk about all sorts of...stuff. We always laugh about things... We kind of look back at [our relationship] and laugh now. Like, we say, "Oh yeah, it was so funny," when[ever] we look at things from the past. [But] things just sort of worked out...and we became best friends.*

The Meta-Story

Thematic Analysis and Presentation of Exemplars

Although the individual stories of sibling maltreatment are interesting and helpful in providing a detailed description of each instigator's experiences, it is also important to compare and contrast these stories in an effort to describe the phenomenon as a whole. Thus, all of the stories were compared with one another and a thematic analysis was conducted so that common themes could be extracted and used to develop a "meta-story", or overriding description, of the experience of the instigators in this study. For each of the themes, I have provided exemplars taken from the participants' stories, in order to provide concrete examples of each theme. Exemplars are defined as events or incidents which stand out as being salient representations or "particularly meaningful transaction[s]..." of a phenomenon (Leonard, 1989, p. 59). By using exemplars as illustrations of each theme, I hoped to allow the reader to gain a deeper understanding of the themes being described and the meaning of the experience of sibling maltreatment for the participants in this study by using their own words. In addition, each finding has been linked to previous literature in the area, as well as important counselling and parenting strategies, as each theme holds important implications for the prevention or treatment of sibling maltreatment.

Acknowledgment of being the instigator. One of the most integral themes that emerged from the participants' stories was that they all considered themselves to be the instigator of the conflict that occurred between them and their siblings, whether it be physical or verbal in nature.

Jeremy: *I was pretty bad as the instigator... One thing that Alex never did was he never initiated physical fights. Alex has never been one to be the aggressor. I can't ever think of a time when he would ever punch me.*

Nancy: *[The one that was ganged up on consistently was] mostly my little brother because my parents favoured him, so we'd get kind of mad over that. My older brother and I would gang up on [Larry]. I never got picked on really, which was good. [Larry] never did anything to me, ever. Like, in my entire life. I can't think of anything.*

Despite the fact that all of the participants in this study label themselves as the instigator of sibling maltreatment, it is striking that many of them later backtrack and place some of the blame on their siblings. In a study conducted by McGuire and colleagues (2000), participants reported that fights were often caused by both siblings, which seems to indicate that conflict within the sibling relationship may occur in a more egalitarian manner; thus, it is possible that there was a certain mutuality to the negative interactions that were occurring with the participants in this study. However, it may also be the case that attributing some of the blame to one's sibling allows the instigator to deny or minimize the severity of the maltreatment and the damage he/she may have caused. In addition, none of the participants seemed to consider the possibility that his/her sibling displayed violence as a form of self-defense.

Jeremy: *We physically fought. Like each throwing fists. We never beat the crap out of each other, but I'd punch them. Instead of going back with him verbally...I'd just hit him...*

> *It's not just me. He'd be the same way. We both would fight... We'd wrestle and fight and kick and punch...*

As the presence of mutuality seems to contradict the definition of maltreatment that was provided in an earlier section, I've had to reconsider my belief that dysfunctional sibling interactions need to be unidirectional. In fact, it seems very possible that two siblings may be engaged in the maltreatment of one another. As described by Klagsbrun (1992), siblings will often use opposite, but complementary tactics, in attempts to gain power over one another. For example, one child may use physical violence, while the other uses tattling to get the other child punished by the parents, or one may use physical forms of maltreatment while the other uses verbal or psychological forms. In addition, aggressive acts displayed by one child often shape aggression in his/her siblings, making it more likely that both will display dysfunctional behaviours over time (Dunn, 1996). Thus, it does not seem necessary that the presence of maltreatment be minimized or accepted due to the fact that two siblings are each being hurtful towards the other, as such a relationship may be causing damage and developmental difficulties for each of them.

In this study, although some participants seem to fall into my previous definition, with a clearly delineated instigator and victim, there are others where the lines are more blurred, leading to the possibility that the definition of maltreatment needs to be expanded to include those situations where negative interactions are more reciprocal in nature. As previously stated, it is also possible that the perception of mutuality was a result of rationalization and minimization on the part of the instigator, which may be due to feelings of guilt or remorse for the poor treatment of his/her sibling (Klagsbrun, 1992). In my earlier study on the victims of sibling maltreatment (Hanoski, 1998), the participants very clearly described the maltreatment as being unidirectional, aside from some attempts to defend themselves or "get back" at the instigator. Although it is interesting that the perceptions of the victims and instigators seem to be so diametrically opposed, these participants were not from the same families, so it is difficult to ascertain whether one perception is more accurate than the other, or if these findings represent different types of siblings relationships. Thus, more research using victims and instigators from the same family would be necessary, in order to examine the role of perception and explore whether the definition of maltreatment needs to be expanded to include mutuality.

This initial finding holds some important counselling implications. First, although it seems that some clients may be willing to identify themselves as being the instigator of sibling maltreatment, it also appears that they may attempt to evade responsibility by claiming that the maltreatment was mutual. As this sort of minimization is also supported by many societal and parental views (Gelles, 1997; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996; Wiehe, 1997b), it would be essential that when working with a family or an individual that the counsellor be aware of these biases and work with the family and sibling to recognize the destructiveness of such behaviour and encourage them to take responsibility for engaging in or allowing these negative interactions. Furthermore, due to the fact that some cases of sibling maltreatment may, in fact, be mutual, it would be important for the counsellor to recognize the difference between functional levels of conflict and more damaging forms of maltreatment and intervene appropriately, even if both siblings are involved in these negative interactions. It would also be important for the counsellor to examine the sequence of negative behaviours in order to identify triggers, escalators, and the patterns that are involved so that such cycles of behaviour can be interrupted and altered to a more adaptive way of handling conflict.

Maltreatment occurred on a daily, "constant" basis. In addition to describing highly intense and negatively charged interactions, one of the salient aspects of the altercations that occurred between the participants and their siblings was the fact that they occurred extremely regularly, with all of the participants in this study stating that negative interactions occurred daily or that the fighting was "constant". This is an important finding with regard to differentiating acceptable levels of conflict from maltreatment, as the definition of maltreatment is one that includes the constancy, or frequency, of the behaviours, in addition to behaviours being highly intense and destructive.

Sandy: *...[Karen] and I fought constantly. We were really close [in age] and really similar in so many ways, [we were] just constantly fighting... [It happened] daily, definitely. We'd get along great for about an hour, and then it would start to deteriorate...*

Jeremy: *We just constantly argued and we couldn't compromise and couldn't be happy. We couldn't have a conversation together without blowing up with each other... It was all the time. For years. All the time.*

This theme is important mainly in arriving at a comprehensive definition of sibling maltreatment, as well as identifying sibling relationships that have "crossed the line" into destructive interactions and are in need of some sort of intervention, whether it be by their parents or by seeking help from an outside source. Thus, it would be helpful for both parents and counsellors to be aware of the integral role of the frequency of disputes, as well as intensity, so that they can differentiate between levels of conflict that are acceptable and those that are destructive (Fried, 1997; Whipple & Finton, 1995; Wiehe, 1998). While in treatment, the frequency of negative interactions can also serve as a means for gauging whether treatment is helpful, by keeping track of the number of disputes and working to decrease their frequency over time.

Confusion with regard to whether the negative interactions were "abusive". Despite the acknowledgment of a high level of negative behaviour between the participants and their siblings, findings were mixed with regard to whether or not they believed that the maltreatment they engaged in was abusive. This is related to the first theme, as the reluctance to label the behaviour as "abuse" may be a form of denial or minimization of the damage caused by the maltreatment. This is also an interesting finding when compared to the stories of the victims (Hanoski, 1998), who were all very firm and certain in defining the maltreatment they received from a sibling as abuse. While this speaks to the differing perceptions of the instigators and victims, it also seems to indicate that the impact of a dysfunctional sibling relationship seems to have a clearer, more negative impression on those who feel they were the recipient of maltreatment than on those who felt that they instigated it.

For the purposes of this study, "abuse" was defined as disputes which are prolonged, accompanied by intense affect, and involve coercion that is based on a recognized power differential (Cicirelli, 1995; Fried, 1997; Herzberger, 1996; Katz et al., 1992; Tedeschi, 1997; Vandell & Bailey, 1992). "Emotional abuse" was defined as behaviour that is used with the intent, or the victim's perception of intent, of degrading, humiliating, or demeaning the victim. According to these definitions, it seems that the behaviour that was described by each of the participants would be defined as abuse. However, only one of the instigators used this label to describe her behaviour toward her sibling.

> *Beth:* *...my definition of abuse...[is] when something affects your sense of self...[your] self-esteem. [For us], it was never physical abuse. If anything, it would be emotional. Mental kinds of abuse... At the time I thought that to be okay...*

Conversely, two of the participants adamantly denied that the behaviour they engaged in was abusive.

> *Jeremy:* *...my brothers have never been [either] mentally or physically abused... I respect that line... We fought, don't get me wrong. But we never crossed that line.*

> *Sandy:* *I would classify abuse as something that has a lasting effect...something that seriously leaves a lasting emotional effect. For some people it might be verbal things or it might be this [sort of thing I'm describing], but that wouldn't leave a lasting effect on me. I always think of it as normal...that's what it was for us, [normal].*

For the final participant, she remains somewhat confused about how to define her interactions with her sibling.

> *Nancy:* *[Abuse would be]...I think in my mind I picture one person being far stronger or something like that... If it's two equals, like brother and sister...it doesn't*

seem [like abuse]. It's normal... I sort of did some things that may be abusive, [but] I didn't feel like I was abusing him...

The participants in this study also seemed to be engaged in other forms of minimization, such as denying that there was any damage done by the maltreatment. This finding was especially interesting in light of the fact that some participants were able to describe negative effects that they have seen in their sibling, and yet deny that the behaviour they engaged in was damaging in any way.

Sandy: *The fighting was just there. We got over it. I wouldn't say there was any negative lasting effects. Nothing serious lasting... You know, a bruise here and there, but nothing serious.*

Jeremy: *[Alex] was always...he had a bit of a wall. I can relate to that because I probably put it there. I probably did it to him...*

...by no means has there ever been any damage done. I just don't think there ever was anything that caused any damage.

Other participants seemed to lack any insight whatsoever that the way they treated their sibling might have had an impact on his/her development.

Nancy: *I don't really think [it had any effects on him]. I don't really see how he would be shaped by [our treatment of him].*

As previously stated, this theme is related to the first, as it seems to be a part of a process of denial and minimization, which appears to be a very common reaction to being involved in the maltreatment of a sibling (Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Ross & Milgram, 1982). Klagsbrun states that instigators of sibling maltreatment may be avoiding the truth of their sibling relationship simply out of the guilt that it induces as they grow older and begin to reflect on the manner in which they treated a sibling. The phenomenon of denial is further compounded by the innate human desire to avoid change (Hapworth et al., 1993; Sandmaier, 1994). Thus, siblings may continue to deny or excuse their behaviours in an attempt to "maintain the status quo" (Hapworth et al., 1993, p. 148). It is also possible that these participants are not engaging in denial and are speaking the truth about there being no damage done to their siblings. As the siblings of these participants were not included in this phase of the study, it would be impossible to know the victimized siblings' experiences without discussing it with them.

When considering the denial and minimization of sibling maltreatment, it is also possible that the instigators were not aware of the extent of any hurt they may have caused; alternatively, they may have forgotten some of the experiences that they had with their siblings or some of the reactions that their siblings had to their treatment of them. In a study conducted by Ross and Milgram (1982), siblings seemed to undergo a process of "forgetting" certain events, which "may not have been random" (p. 247); these authors state that these shifts in perception may serve a positive function by allowing siblings to develop healthier relationships with their siblings by letting go of any negative experiences. However, other researchers have commented on the fact that recognition and acknowledgment of past hurts is the very thing a victimized sibling needs in order to put the past behind him/her and begin to build a more positive relationship (Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994).

These differing needs may have to be addressed in therapy, so that past hurts can be vocalized and each sibling can become more open to hearing the other's perceptions (Sandmaier, 1994). In many cases, the counsellor will need to be aware that the impact and extent of the maltreatment may be ignored or understated by the instigator, which may mean that the siblings will have to work towards taking small steps towards the expression of feelings, the willingness to listen to one another's point of view, and the experimentation of new behaviours (Sandmaier, 1994; Tedeschi, 1997). The counsellor will also need to be cognizant of the possibility that siblings in therapy may not want their sibling relationships to change. As described by Sandmaier (1993):

> ...resistance to change is so powerful -- in our siblings, in other family members, in ourselves -- our efforts demand enormous staying power. We need to be

> tolerant of both ourselves and our sister or brother as we try something new and "blow it," as old habits reassert themselves, as entrenched family rules...get in our way, as we get derailed again and again by fear or frustration or guilt (p. 238/9).

Belief that "conflict" is inevitable and "normal" in a sibling relationship. The majority of participants in this study expressed the belief that "conflict" within the sibling relationship is to be expected. Some even went so far as to say that a sibling relationship without conflict would be more worrisome to them than one that was. In addition, none of the participants seemed to consider the possibility that there would be a limit to what would be deemed acceptable.

Nancy: *I think it was normal [for a] sibling relationship... If you're family you can get away with a lot more than if you're not. It's okay if you're brothers... [Siblings are] supposed to do that. It just happens.*

Sandy: *...I always think of it as normal...I just think of it as part of [being siblings]. It happens. Just a little bit of conflict, little bit of fighting. A little bit of yelling. A little bit of hair pulling. We had long hair. [That's] just the way it worked. [Siblings] can't always get along...I think that stuff is...almost natural in my opinion. Like, a little bit of aggression. Not too big of a deal. If [I] just saw two friends sitting there pulling each other's hair, it would probably be, "Whoa." But siblings...I don't know why, but they do get away with more and it's expected...that they're going to get yelled at and there's going to be a little bit of fighting and conflict.*

Jeremy: *Brothers aren't supposed to be friends. There are certain circumstances where [siblings] can really get along well...that's fine and dandy, but that's not the way it really works. You're gonna fight with your siblings. It's just the way it is...confrontations will always be a part of being [siblings]. It's inevitable. If I have kids and they don't fight, then I know there's something wrong...*

This finding feeds directly into the prevailing societal and familial belief that conflict is acceptable and natural within the sibling relationship (Gelles, 1997; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996). It appears that the participants in this study have adopted and incorporated this viewpoint, without differentiating between differing levels of conflict. It is interesting that many of the participants in this study also stated that they would not want their children to have a sibling relationship with as much conflict as they had with their sibling; despite this, the majority maintain that the conflict they experienced was "normal". It appears that by labeling their negative interactions as natural and inevitable, they are excusing their behaviour, as well as minimizing the negative impact it may have had on their sibling.

This theme is similar to the previous one, in that the main issue for counsellors and other health professionals is to raise awareness of the difference between acceptable levels of conflict and more damaging forms of maltreatment, and then educating parents and families on the difference between the two so that negative cycles of behaviour can be interrupted and altered to more adaptive ways of behaving (Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Wiehe, 1998). As this belief is prominent throughout society, awareness and education would have to extend beyond the family to society as a whole, so that the general population comes to see sibling maltreatment as unacceptable and begins to search for more healthy ways for siblings to behave with one another. In therapy, it would be important for the counsellor to be aware of his/her own biases in this area, so that he/she does not overlook any incidences of sibling maltreatment (Wiehe, 1998). In addition, the counsellor will need to address the maladaptive beliefs that are held by the clients, in an effort to reeducate and shift their tolerance of negative behaviour between siblings.

High levels of competition and jealousy. All of the participants in this study seemed to experience feelings of competition or jealousy with their siblings. In some cases, this was due to their perception of blatant favouritism on the part of their parents.

Nancy: *...my parents favoured him...they would just give him whatever he wanted... He'd totally use it and get what he wanted and he didn't even have to ask because he would get whatever, because he was the favourite. It really, really bothered us. [My parents] were obvious about it...*

Beth: *Duncan was very pampered...and that still bothers me. He's up on a pedestal... [I'd] kind of want to knock him off the pegs, 'cause...[he's like[the perfect* *child. I guess maybe [my parents] showed a preference for my brother...I never felt like I was less loved...I just think that they played favourites.*

This finding is related to previous literature and research in the area of parental differential treatment, where findings indicate that favouritism can often lead to maltreatment between siblings due to heightened feelings of competition and jealousy (Brody et al., 1998; Brody & Stoneman, 1994; Brody & Stoneman, 1996; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Cicirelli, 1994; Dunn, 1988; Green, 1984; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Mander, 1991; Reid & Donovan, 1990; Ross & Milgram, 1982; Sandmaier, 1994; Vandell & Bailey, 1992; Volling & Elins, 1998). Thus, this theme holds many important implications for parents, who need to ensure that they are treating their children in an egalitarian manner, while also fostering their uniqueness (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Hapworth et al., 1993; Mander, 1991; Sandmaier, 1994). This is also an area that counsellors may need to address in family therapy (Brody et al., 1998), as parents may be unaware that they are treating their children differentially or they may lack an understanding of the negative effects of such treatment; thus, education will need to play a vital role, and may be useful for both prevention and treatment of sibling maltreatment.

In addition to feelings of competition arising from differential treatment, participants also expressed feelings of jealousy or competition over other aspects of their sibling relationship, such as envying their sibling for certain traits with which he/she was endowed or for being so similar to one another that there was simply a basic sense of competition.

Jeremy: *Alex is really smart. It's sick. This has always pissed me off too because I know he's smart and...I had to work my ass off. I was always a little upset at [Alex] because he had no heart, no desire, no drive, no motivation, nothing. He just coasted. Even through life...whereas me, I was like go, go, go, go, go all the time.*

Beth: *It just seems like everything was perfect [for him]. Things just seemed to come more difficult for me. Everything came to him really well. He's good looking and athletic and seemed to be popular and have friends and...everything* *seemed more difficult for me... I guess [I was] jealous, envious... Things just looked...too good and I wanted that too.*

Sandy: *Everything had to be really equal with us because if somebody got a bigger birthday present or a bigger Christmas present, oh there'd be a real problem. So as long as everything was equal...it was good. [There was] big time [competition between Karen] and I.*

This theme of competition was also found in my earlier study of the victims (Hanoski, 1998), where participants reported that they believed that much of the maltreatment they received was due to heightened feelings of rivalry. As defined in an earlier section, "rivalry" often occurs as a result of competition between siblings for the attention, love, recognition, and affection of their parents (Leung and Robson, 1991; Mander, 1991). Although rivalry between siblings is a common occurrence, and is not necessarily destructive, feelings of rivalry can also escalate to the point where siblings begin to engage in violent and damaging behaviours with one another (Leung & Robson, 1991; Rosenthal & Doherty, 1984; Wiehe, 1998). From the stories told by the participants in this study, it appears that a great deal of their animosity and negativity seems to have developed out of an escalation in rivalry, where they began to act out as a result of feelings of jealousy and resentment, or out of a battle for parental attention (Catiglia, 1989).

Many of these feelings of competitiveness and jealousy seem to have arisen from the ascription of particular roles, such as Jeremy being cast as the "athletic one" while Alex was the "smart one." As described in a previous chapter, although roles can be helpful in allowing children to develop their own talents and thus, stop competing with one another, they can also be destructive if the children feel somehow less valued for their own role or become envious for the talents of their brothers or sisters (Bryant, 1982; Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Mnader, 1991; Sandmaier, 1994). In order to avoid this, parents need to be encouraged to avoid casting their children in particular roles, comparing the achievements or abilities of the children, excluding a child from a certain activity because of a sibling's talent in that area, or giving more value to certain accomplishments over others (Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Hapworth et al., 1993; Mander, 1991; Sandmaier, 1994). Klagsbrun adds that children may strive to develop different talents in order to establish their own individuality and identity; however, similarities between siblings also need to be maintained so that the children have something in common that will serve as a sense of connection. Thus, in therapy, adult siblings can be encouraged to intentionally search out areas of similarity and reestablish shared interests in order to develop a closer relationship (Klagsbrun, 1992).

When working with a family in counselling, it would be very important for the counsellor to educate the family members on the difference between rivalry and maltreatment and encourage parents to be conscious of the interactions of their children so that they do not escalate to levels which can be damaging. This is also related to differential treatment, as equal treatment of one's children would be an essential aspect of maintaining rivalry at an acceptable level (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Hapworth et al., 1993; Sandmaier, 1994). Children can be encouraged to develop their own interests and talents, and parents need to ensure that they are praising them for their efforts, without focusing too much attention on the achievements of any one child. By avoiding comparisons between children and focusing on the uniqueness of each, parents can learn to control the levels of competition that exist between their children and curb any desires for violently acting out against feelings of inadequacy, rejection, or resentment (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Catiglia, 1989; Dunn, 1988; Green, 1984; Mander, 1991; Reid & Donovan, 1990; Vandell & Bailey, 1992).

Maltreatment occurred over trivial matters. The majority of the participants indicated that altercations would often occur over seemingly trivial matters, such as sharing a bedroom, belongings being taken without permission, or having different interests. In addition, disputes over toys, television, and territory seemed to be commonplace.

Jeremy: *One thing I have never done in my life to my brothers is that I have never* *taken anything of theirs without asking. But, on the flip side, I've had things go missing - clothes, you name it, everything... I can think of countless times that [both my brothers] have taken my clothes and...ruined them on me. So that's a perfect opportunity to instigate a fight.*

Nancy: *The worst thing we fought over was Lego... Or a TV show to watch. That was a pretty popular one [to fight over]... Or he'd take the last cookie or something.*

Sandy: *...usually [there was] fighting over toys. "I want to play with this." "[No], I want to play with this." When we were younger it was just really tense because we shared a bedroom... I was messy and she wasn't...[so] there was lots of conflict over that. In our room we had to keep everything separate to keep us happy.*

Although at first glance it appears that these issues are petty and perhaps of little interest, on further inspection all of these issues appear to share a common theme of being related to territory, ownership, individuality, and entitlement, which is important knowledge to have when attempting to develop appropriate prevention and intervention strategies. These issues have been found to be very common between siblings in other studies and situations as well (Bryant, 1982; Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Klagsbrun, 1992; McGuire et al., 2000), indicating that as children begin to develop an identity and strong sense of self, it becomes extremely important for them to exert this individuality within the sibling relationship, as well as to assert their personal boundaries (Bryant, 1982; Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Klagsbrun, 1992; McGuire et al., 2000; Sandmaier, 1994). These authors state that this becomes even more apparent when these needs are not being met and one's individuality or sense of fairness has been thwarted, which appears to lead to extremely negative feelings which may then be acted out through conflict and maltreatment.

These issues may also be related to the concept of power, as the children seem to be engaging in constant "pulls for power" over parental attention, possessions, space, and control (Klagsbrun, 1992, p. 46). As the definition of maltreatment that was used in this study included the role of a recognized power differential between siblings (Cicirelli, 1995; Fried, 1997; Herzberger, 1996; Katz et al., 1992; Tedeschi, 1997;

Vandell & Bailey, 1992), it is essential that parents ensure that one child does not have an excessive degree of power over his/her siblings. Thus, parents need to monitor their children's behaviour and respond to their needs in an egalitarian manner that fosters each child's independence, so that the children do not respond excessively to small slights in fairness with hostility and anger. In addition, parents need to ensure that children are not using maltreatment in order to derive some of the power which they seem to be striving with such a desire to gain.

Feeling "parental" towards one's siblings. Another common theme for the participants in this study was the finding that many of them felt as though they were somewhat "parental" towards their siblings, either through pressures placed on them by their parents or by taking on a role of being the "responsible one." This seems to have come about for a variety of reasons, such as gender, having certain personality characteristics, or for being the oldest.

Sandy: *I was the bossy one, so she would often get sick of that and that's when it would often start. [But] I felt like I was the mom and the boss over her and sometimes she felt like I was too... I was just older and I figured that I should decide what we would play and...I just had to be the one that was always in charge.*

Jeremy: *[If you were to talk to Alex, he'd say], "Jeremy tried to be the father figure," and yes, I did. I'll admit that. [So] Alex and Chad would call me "dad" all the time. I got "dad" hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of times. It was horrible. Mom and dad never put any pressure, but they'd always say, "Well you are the oldest. You have to be a good example." I guess that's part of being the first born.*

Beth: *I used to feel that...I was under too much responsibility. Just being the female...having household stuff to do. My mom's very traditional...and my brother was never put up to those expectations... He could go and do his thing and I would have to be responsible. It seemed unfair...*

This theme is interesting for several reasons, as it carries many implications for the development of a dysfunctional sibling relationship. First of all, it seems that such a sense of responsibility may feed into the feelings of rivalry and competition described above, as many of the participants alluded to the "unfairness" of having to be more responsible than their siblings (Ross & Milgram, 1982; Sandmaier, 1994). Second, for some of the participants, by taking on the parental role, they also seemed to adopt an attitude whereby they felt entitled to "punish" their siblings if they did not react or behave in desired ways. In many cases, the form of punishment that was used seemed to model those that were used by their parents, which is another theme that will be described in more detail in a further section. In addition, as described in a study conducted by Bryant (1982), siblings who were left in a caretaking role engaged in more physical forms of punishment than their parents normally would have used, which seems to indicate that "parental" siblings feel that they are somehow entitled to react to their frustrations with a sibling in a physical manner.

Third, the role of being a parent is one that implies a certain level of power and control over the "children," which could contribute to the development of a power differential between two siblings (Bryant, 1992; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Ross & Milgram, 1982). This is important due to the fact that the definition of maltreatment that was used in this study included the concept of power, with one sibling attempting to gain control over the other (Cicirelli, 1995; Fried, 1997; Herzberger, 1996; Katz et al., 1992; Tedeschi, 1997; Vandell & Bailey, 1992). Thus, it is possible that siblings who adopt a parental role may use this position to achieve more power over one's siblings, which may then contribute to the development of more violent interactions between them.

The counselling implications of this theme seem to be similar to those of previous themes, in that much of the responsibility needs to fall to the parents, as it is important for them to monitor their own behaviour and ensure that they are distributing responsibility fairly between their children. It is also important for parents to be conscious of the role of power and that they pay attention to the interactions of their children, intervening if there are any signs of one child attempting to gain power or control over the other. Thus, once again, much of the resolution to the difficulties that could be encountered with this theme involve parental education and the raising of awareness. In addition, it would be important to help one's children to develop feelings of empowerment and control in their own lives, so that they do not feel the need to gain power by exerting control over others. This can be accomplished by allowing them to have choices and giving them the freedom to pursue their own interests and talents (Faber & Mazlish, 1987). If a child does seem to be displaying signs of powerlessness, it would be essential for a parent to address this and try to fulfill this need and feel empowered in more adaptive and healthy ways.

Modeling of maladaptive behaviours displayed by parents. As alluded to in the previous section, the participants in this study tended to model the maladaptive behaviours that their parents were exhibiting, particularly when feeling angry or when they were involved in some sort of conflict with their siblings. Many of the participants in this study described a clear connection between parental patterns of behaviour and their own, with the majority being conscious of learning these ways of being through the observation of their parents.

Beth: *My brother doesn't deal with conflict. He'll choose not to deal with things and that's kind of always where the conflict is. I'd want to talk about stuff and [for] my brother, [the conflict] doesn't exist. [So] I'd bring up things and want to talk about it or hash it out and my brother was kind of like...not having [any part of it]. It seems like we kind of followed our parents that way because my father's very much like that and [Duncan] kind of followed the same tendencies. And then my mom...would cry or whatever and she wants to deal with things.*

Nancy: *My mother would yell. She yelled a lot...so I think we kind of picked it up from her.*

Jeremy: *If [there's] anything that my dad and I have in common it's that we both have short fuses. He has an incredibly short fuse. He'd yell and always get mad at us. There was no iron fist, but I remember being smacked in the face a few times by my father. Which was fine but I think him always yelling at us, beating [his] way [through his frustrations], that was incorporated in all three of us. I think that was incorporated genetically.*

In addition to these patterned ways of behaving, the participants in this study also described discipline tactics or intervention strategies that were likely to be ineffectual in handling sibling maltreatment, such as corporal punishment and simply telling the children to stop what they were doing.

Jeremy: *...he spanked me. He smacked me in the ass. He did it to all of us. He smacked me on the cheek a couple of times and I'd have a red cheek, but I had it coming... My dad was the disciplinarian and it sort of went back to dad. [When we were fighting, he] would let things go for a while and then he'd be like, "Okay guys. Just stop. I can't do this anymore. I'm trying to watch TV..." 95% of the time he'd get right in there and say, "Stop you guys. You're not supposed to be doing this," and he'd yell at us...*

Nancy: *I remember when we fought in the car. [My parents] would tell us to quit... They'd get real mad because we were being annoying, not just because we were picking on Larry... They'd get mad and we'd all get a spanking when we got home.*

As described in a previous chapter, children will often learn aggressive behaviour from parents who model violent behaviour in the home, through corporal punishment, high levels of marital conflict, or spousal abuse (Brody & Stoneman, 1994; Cicirelli, 1995; Freeman, 1993; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Graham-Bermann et al., 1994; Herzberger, 1996; Jorgenson, 1986; Kashani et al., 1992; Katz et al., 1992; Steinmetz, 1977a; Train, 1993; Wiehe, 1998; Withecomb, 1997). In addition, many parents intervene in ways which are ineffective in stopping children from engaging in the maltreatment of one another, such as by punishing the child with corporal punishment, which only reinforces the use of violent behaviour (Wiehe, 1997b). Alternatively, Wiehe (1997b) writes that parents will often ignore the behaviour or simply tell their children to stop, which does not help them to learn what they are doing wrong or how to change these destructive interactions.

Thus, when considering counselling implications, parental awareness and education is extremely important, as parents need to become knowledgeable about effective methods of discipline, the effects of their behaviour on their children's learning, and the cycle of violence that can occur if aggressive behaviour is displayed in the home (Straus et al., 1980; Truscott, 1989; Widom, 1998). It is also important for parents to learn how to provide their children with clear guidelines and to model appropriate conflict resolution strategies, so that their children learn these ways of behaving and can replace maladaptive or violent methods of conflict resolution with more constructive behaviours (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Hapworth et al., 1993; Kashani et al., 1992; Klagsbrun, 1992; Snyder & Schrepferman, 1997).

Limited coping strategies. The next theme that emerged from the narratives was the fact that the majority of the participants did not appear to have many effective coping strategies. In fact, many of them used the maladaptive behaviours that they exhibited with their siblings as a means to release their frustration and anger, which may have been reinforcing for them and may have led to a repetition of aggression in future interactions as they came to learn that violent behaviour was an effective way to rid themselves of negative emotions. Furthermore, many of the participants commented on the fact that there was never any acknowledgment of their sibling disputes, as their interactions were never discussed or resolved and there was never any apologies for hurtful behaviour.

Jeremy: *I think that was a big thing, being impatient. I just could not spend the time to talk to them. I could not wait for my emotions to calm down. I just had to get it out and then I'd be fine. Then I could go and do something else.*

Sandy: *[To resolve an argument], one of us would leave. Generally, [we'd] just take some time apart. We never really apologized to each other. It was just, after a while, we'd get over it and then we'd be back together again.*

Nancy: *We never fought bad enough that we were mad for even a whole hour. We'd have this big fight and yell and scream and then, later we'd be like, "Yeah, you want to go to the 7-11?" I would just wait out his mood...come back and everything would be fine... When we got older, like in high school and stuff, every day... we'd yell at each other and [afterward] we'd be like, "Okay whatever"... Now I think you would apologize to someone you'd yelled at...[but] we never, ever did.*

This theme is interesting because it may account for some of the learning of aggressive behaviour through operant conditioning, as behaviours which are reinforcing or which lead to desired consequences, such as the release of negative emotions, are likely to be repeated on future occasions when the individual desires similar consequences (Herzberger, 1996; Snyder & Schrepferman, 1997). Furthermore, by not having learned appropriate coping strategies, the children may come to rely on these maladaptive way of dealing with their emotions, simply because they do not have alternatives to choose from. This has important implications for counselling, in that the counsellor needs to identify these destructive patterns of behaviour and provide alternative methods for both parents and children.

It is also likely that issues which are not resolved will resurface again in the future, which may account for the high frequency level of sibling disputes for these participants (Siddiqui & Ross, 1999). These authors state that it is possible that children are learning to leave conflicts unresolved from their parents or from their other interactions within the family, as parent-child conflict and disputes between adults frequently end in this same way, with both parties withdrawing either physically or psychologically. Although this method may be easier and less time consuming, as well as less emotionally draining, it will not be very helpful in teaching children healthier methods of resolving conflicts (Siddiqui & Ross, 1999). Thus, parents and/or counselors will need to help children find suitable resolutions to their disputes, as well as model appropriate resolution strategies in their own interactions, in order to avoid any carry over of conflict into future altercations and to help children initiate these forms of resolution on their own. Siddiqui and Ross write that this may be particularly important for young children, who may lack the cognitive ability to reach a positive conflict resolution or may be contending with power issues within the sibling relationship.

Several authors have stated that the most effective method for helping children to develop appropriate conflict resolution skills is for parents to *mediate* their children's conflict, which allows for indirect parental intervention while the children develop their own solutions to their difficulties (Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Severe, 2000; Siddiqui & Ross, 1999). As described in a study by Siddiqui and Ross, sibling disputes which ended with resolutions that were imposed by parents did not tend to carry over into future altercations. Thus, parents may need to use "scaffolding," where they facilitate conflict resolution according to the developmental level and abilities of the children, and adjust their amount of input as the children begin to master skills on their own (Siddiqui & Ross, 1999, p. 329). This is an area which may need to be facilitated by the counsellor, as parents may not be aware of the influence of their interventions or knowledgeable about the process of mediation.

This theme is also interesting because of the fact that the participants reported that they never apologized for any hurtful behaviour they engaged in. While this may have been due to the desire to avoid continuing the argument, especially when lacking the tools to do so in a constructive manner, this finding may also indicate a lack of empathy. As described by Caffaro and Conn-Caffaro (1998) and Wiehe (1997a), one of the reasons that some aggressive children may engage in violent behaviour is due to an inability to understand the feelings of others. Thus, it would be important for the counsellor to be able to identify such children and help them to learn how to take the perspective of others so that they become more aware of how their behaviour may be impacting their siblings. Strategies such as compromise and reconciliation have been described as being helpful in teaching children to consider the perspective and feelings of others, which may lead to greater social understanding and healthier interactions in the future (Siddiqui & Ross, 1999). Researchers have found that children who engage in pretend play tend to display more empathy and understanding for others, as well as to develop healthier relationships with their siblings (Dunn, 1996; Klagsbrun, 1992); thus, parents and counsellors can encourage children to engage in symbolic forms of play, whether it be through play acting, using puppets or dolls, or telling stories, in order to help them develop feelings for others and strengthen the sibling relationship (Wiehe, 1997a).

Improvement of the relationship through the fostering of differences. The next theme concerns ways in which the participants in this study were able to overcome some of their negative interactions with their siblings. For several participants, the quality of their sibling relationship improved as they got older and each child had the opportunity to develop his/her own interests and talents. This was identified as one of the main ways in which negative interactions were ameliorated, particularly if encouraged by parents to develop these individual interests, as the participants were able to have an area of competence, or "niche", where they did not feel that they had to compete with their sibling. In fact, many of the participants stated that the quality of their sibling relationship would have been much more negative had they not fostered these differences.

Beth: *We were always just very different... I really felt that my parents did a great job of fostering our interests and supporting that... My brother was really into...sports and stuff like that. I was into music. We had different interests and we were good at different things... Since we seemed to excel at different things, it was fine.*

Sandy: *When we got into high school we started to see some differences. She was very, very athletic... I started getting into student leadership stuff, so I was kind of the student vice-president and she was the big athlete star...we started to build our individual differences, and it was good that they were different from each other... [That helped our relationship a lot] 'cause if we were both good at the same things, then we'd be directly competing but when we started to take on different things it was better and we encouraged each other and that kind of thing... Once we found out about our differences we got along better...*

This theme is important when considering ways in which a family can avoid the development of a destructive relationship between siblings or to intervene appropriately in one where maltreatment is already occurring. It also appears to be related to the previous finding that parents need to avoid differential treatment and attempt to support and value the talents and abilities of each child (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998). From the statements made by the participants in this study, it appears that this can be accomplished not only by valuing the unique personality characteristics of each child, but by actively encouraging their involvement in activities in which they have an interest (Faber & Mazlish, 1987). Getting one's children involved in extracurricular activities would be invaluable for a variety of reasons, such as the development of self-esteem, independence, and individuality, as well as fostering a sense of accomplishment and helping to lessen feelings of competition between siblings (Bryant, 1982; Klagsbrun, 1992; Mander, 1991; Sandmaier, 1994). However, as previously stated in an earlier section, it is also important that parents avoid delegating particular roles or differentially valuing the accomplishments of their children, as competition, resentment, and jealousy over role assignments can create an extremely damaging effect on the sibling relationship (Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Mander, 1991; Ross & Milgram, 1982; Sandmaier, 1994).

Coming together through crisis. Another important aspect of the sibling stories told by the instigators is the fact that many of them were able to begin to build healthier sibling relationships by coming together through crisis. Thus, it seems that even though siblings may be engaging in a high level of negative interactions, when crisis strikes, they are able to put their differences aside and support one another.

Jeremy: *One of my best friends (Blake) lived with us for 3 years. His parents were going back to Europe and he didn't have any place to live, so my mom and dad took him in. He really started to treat my mom and dad with absolutely no respect and that's uncalled for because...my parents are awesome. I think this falling out [with Blake]...really helped out a lot with my brothers because...[Blake] was really mean to me too and my brothers felt for me. They felt really bad...*

Sandy: *...when I was graduating grade 12, [Maureen, my older sister, who was adopted] was getting married and she actually went and researched and found her birth mother. She found out that she had three natural half brothers and [Karen] and I didn't like that at all because she was our sister, not anyone else's. We never, ever thought of her as being adopted, but then it was kind of...we had to think of her as being different... [Karen] and I got really threatened because...all of a sudden, [Maureen] was a different person... When she first announced that she had these three half brothers, and this whole other family, it was kind of tough on us... I just remember [Karen] and I sat* *there and had a really long talk about stuff that night and...bonded together...*

This finding is an extremely positive one, not only because it speaks to the tremendous strength of the sibling bond (Cicirelli, 1994; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994), but it also creates an atmosphere of hope and trust that siblings can move past their negativity and build a closer relationship to one another. It can also help siblings to see the loyalty they share (Bank & Kahn, 1982a), and the support and comfort they will be able to find in one another in the case that they should ever need it (Dunn, 1996; Klagsbrun, 1992; Ross & Milgram, 1982; Sandmaier, 1994). This finding was also discussed with regard to the victims of sibling maltreatment, with the victims reporting that the instigators became more open and supportive in times of difficulty (Hanoski, 1998). As described by Cicirelli (1994), one's sibling may be particularly helpful in times of need due to shared values and perceptions of events, as well as a long history of intimate family experiences that have helped to strengthen the sibling bond.

This aspect of the sibling relationship can be used by counsellors to help siblings become closer to one another, perhaps through role play or the presentation of hypothetical situations, or asking the siblings for times when their brother or sister has been there for them in times of need. These exceptions can then be used to build a foundation of a healthier relationship and create hope that positive interactions will continue in the future. The counsellor will also have to be aware that some researchers have found that if a sibling relationship is already characterized by negativity, then negative interactions tends to get exacerbated by family crises (Klagsbrun, 1992; Ross & Milgram, 1982; Sandmaier, 1994). Thus, some siblings may be distressed by the lack of support they have received from a sibling during a time of stress, which may need to be mourned and dealt with in therapy.

Having regrets. It is interesting to note that despite the fact that most of the participants seem to minimize the negative impact of the maltreatment they engaged in, all of them stated that they had regrets or would make changes to their sibling relationship if they were given the opportunity to do so. While some of these regrets were directly related to the negative interactions they were engaged in, other participants had regrets with regard to the lack of a close sibling relationship.

Jeremy: *There's a lot of regrets...if I could ever change something, that would be it...that I had never...hit him... He'd hit me back, but the fact of the matter, I initiated it... I may have been selfish, I guess, with regards to not respecting what my brothers wanted to do and how they wanted to grow up. [If I could], I'd change [the way things were]. I would have loved to be able to go out and say that my brothers are my best friends. I never did and I'd like to change that. I think we could have...hung out and done more things together because...we never really have hung out.*

Nancy: *[If I could change my past, it would be for there to] just not [be] so much yelling. [If I were to have my own kids one day], I'd want them to not yell as much.*

Beth: *[If I could change anything, I would make us] be closer. I rarely talk to my brother in any kind of open [way]...like [by] sharing things [with one another]. We rarely talk about our personal lives or relationships or how we're feeling and stuff like that. I don't talk to him [openly], even to this day. It would really be nice to have a sibling that you had that close relationship...*

It is interesting that the instigators express a deep desire for a closer relationship with their sibling, as the victims often express a similar wish (Hanoski, 1998). The question here, then, would be what keeps two siblings from bridging the gap, especially when both siblings are willing and desire to be closer? Although this issue is complicated by the fact that the victims and instigators from these two studies are from different families, and that the desires of two siblings from the same family may be different, with one wanting a closer relationship and the other not, it would still be useful to examine what keeps a sibling from attempting to build a closer relationship, as this may be helpful for the counsellor in working with the family in therapy. For example, both the victim and instigator may be reluctant to become closer to his/her sibling due to a fear of being hurt or rejected, feelings of resentment or anger over their childhood relationship, resistance to change or to taking responsibility, or the assumption that the desire for a closer relationship is not reciprocated (Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994) . Once identified, the counsellor can help the siblings to overcome these feelings and fears in order to work together on building a closer relationship.

If the siblings are not involved in therapy, the dissemination of knowledge and the raising of awareness of the issue of sibling maltreatment may be helpful for each sibling in gaining compassion and understanding for the other, and becoming willing to forgive the past and move towards the development of a closer relationship. It would also be beneficial for them to become aware of the fact that many siblings, whether they are instigators or victims, long to be closer to their siblings (Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994), which may help them to take a risk at forging a relationship. Thus, it is extremely important that the findings of studies on this topic be disseminated to the general public, as well as being distributed to professionals.

Finally, there is also the possibility that within a particular sibling dyad, one sibling may be interested in maintaining a close relationship while the other sibling does not reciprocate these feelings. Although rare, there may also be extreme cases where a sibling completely cuts off any contact with his/her brother or sister (Klagsbrun, 1992). In such cases, if the instigator is involved in therapy, he/she can work through his/her feelings of grief and loss, as well as any anger and hurt that has arisen from such a situation (Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994). Even in situations where both siblings are willing to work towards a closer relationship, Klagsbrun and Sandmaier write that many siblings hold an idealistic hope that they will be able to become "best friends" with a sibling, which is often not the case; even when siblings have managed to bridge the distance and have forgiven past hurts, there often remains occasions where they will disappoint one another or have conflicts. Thus, the counsellor may need to help the client to develop realistic plans and goals for the future, such as a way in which to broach the topic or to become closer to his/her sibling without having unrealistic expectations; the counsellor will also need to work on the development of healthy coping strategies in the case that such an attempt does not prove fruitful.

Learning from their negative sibling interactions. For the majority of the participants, a positive outcome of sibling maltreatment was the fact that they were able to identify learnings that occurred through their sibling relationship. For some, these revolved around the resolution of conflict, while others learned about different aspects of personality, helping them to come to a realization about how they want to be in the world.

Nancy: *I wouldn't yell at my brother now...[partly] because I don't get annoyed at things, [but I've also learned] that no one appreciates it and it's not really going to help anything either... I think maybe [my brothers] influenced me to be nicer and want to talk and [be] more considerate 'cause...I don't like the way Steve [yelled and all that]. I didn't want to be like that to anybody [anymore].*

Beth: *[I learned that] when you have problems that you have to talk about them and [I learned] how essential it is just to vent to [some]body and share [your feelings] and just be really honest about them because...when bad things are happening, I can't deal with them on my own. I can't internalize them.*

Sandy: *[I] just learned how to get along better...with people in general.*

As described in a previous chapter, one of the positive aspects of sibling conflict, as opposed to maltreatment, is the fact that siblings have the opportunity to learn how to handle conflict in extra-familial relationships by helping them to learn skills of argument and how to take another person's point of view (Bank & Kahn, 1982; Dunn, 1984; Dunn, 1996; Klagsbrun, 1992; Stormshak et al., 1996; Straus et al., 1980). Although this may be the case with the above learnings, in reading the stories of the participants in this study, it appears that they learned appropriate conflict resolution strategies and the expression of feelings by learning what *not* to do from their interactions with their siblings. Although this seems to be somewhat paradoxical, this may be an important point to make with regard to sibling relationships, in that learning can occur with the experimentation of both positive and negative ways of interacting.

However, it is difficult to ascertain whether the participants in this study have actually learned how to use healthy conflict resolution strategies, as opposed to simply desiring a more healthy way to handle conflicts with others. Much of the literature indicates that it is more likely for aggressive behaviour in childhood to shape future aggression, meaning that both the victim and the instigator may come to use dysfunctional methods to resolve conflict in their future interpersonal relationships (Dunn, 1984; Finkelhor & Dzuiba-Leatherman, 1994; Fried, 1997; Gully et al., 1981; Loeber et al., 1983; Perry et al., 1992; Steinmetz, 1978). As the quality of other, extra-familial relationships were not explored in this study, it is impossible to know the manner of conflict that is actually being employed. It would be interesting to examine this in future research projects, perhaps by exploring links between sibling maltreatment and conflict resolution with friends, colleagues, and romantic partners.

This theme would be useful in counselling in helping siblings to work on more effective ways to express anger and handle conflict. When used in conjunction with the regrets that were described in a previous section, adult clients who instigated maltreatment with a sibling may be helped to see how their previous behaviour was ineffective and that the development of an alternate manner of conflict resolution is necessary. The fact that an individual can often glean positive effects from negative life events is also important, as this idea may help the client to overcome any feelings of guilt or anger that he/she is carrying over the quality of his/her sibling relationship. This can be expanded on in therapy, by identifying other learnings and positive effects that may have occurred for both the client and his/her sibling, leading to feelings of resolution and closure. This principle would also be helpful in working with a family in therapy, as the effects of conflict resolution -- both the positive effects of healthy resolution and the ramifications of maltreatment -- can be highlighted and used to show parents the strength and influence of the sibling relationship on adult functioning, which can then lead into working on more adaptive ways of handling disputes in the family.

Positive aspects to the sibling relationship. Another important theme that emerged from the narratives is the fact that all of the participants were able to name positive aspects to their sibling relationship. While some of these occurred in childhood, others occurred later in life, which seemed to serve as "turning points" in the quality of the sibling relationship.

Sandy: *...we always thought [our older sister] was the coolest when all her friends were over...so we'd often bond together...if we were trying to spy on her and her boyfriend in the basement...*

Jeremy: *...the folks took us to Las Vegas and California for two weeks... We'd never really done that before other than, like, driving in the car for a week. I thought that on this trip I wouldn't have that much fun with my brothers. I was really nervous... I was like, "I'm not going to have any fun with those guys,"...but from the second we were there we walked around the strip. We really got along well and kind of got to be stupid brothers and just hang out... I think that was the turning point...*

These positive aspects are important to note, especially for counsellors, as they can be used as a thread of connection between siblings who are trying to come to terms with the past and mend their relationship. Not only do positive memories from childhood serve as a reminder that there is strength in the sibling bond (Cicirelli, 1994; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994), but they can also be used as a foundation on which to build a more positive relationship by creating a sense of shared history and connection over time (Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Ross & Milgram, 1982; Sandmaier, 1994). As described by Sandmaier (1994):

> Everything that happened between ourselves and our siblings in those early years is stored in some deep yet accessible burrow within, influencing the way we now feel when a brother or sister enters a room, wins a promotion, calls our name, doesn't show up. There is an imprint, whether we choose to look at it or

> not. For those who choose to look, however, unexpected possibilities may emerge. As we look down through time to watch sibling memories float upward, their shapes and weight may shift as we notice the forces that jointly forged those early moments of need, pain, rivalry, and love (p. 41).

Positive events that occur in adulthood are also extremely helpful in counselling, as they can be used as a base on which to build a closer sibling relationship, as well as serve as evidence that the relationship is changing and moving in a more positive direction. In many cases in therapy, highlighting exceptions to a dominant, problem story can be especially helpful in showing clients that there are some positive aspects to their situation or relationship, which can alter their perceptions as well as create hope for the future (White & Epston, 1990).

In addition to the positive events described above, many of the participants stated that one of the main positive aspects to their sibling relationship is the fact that they have been able to discuss the maltreatment that occurred as they were growing up, which in some cases has led to apologies, confessions, and feelings of closure. Other authors have also commented on the integral role of open discussion and the expression of one's feelings in order to reach a place of resolution (Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994). The counsellor can encourage the expression of one's feelings through a variety of mediums, whether it be by discussing family issues with parents or siblings, writing letters to family members, or expressing one's feelings in a personal journal (Klagsbrun, 1992). This seems to have been extremely helpful for the participants in this study; even for those who have not reached a level of intimacy where an open and honest discussion with one's sibling could take place, they state that their relationship has improved considerably over the years.

Jeremy: *I was talking to him on the phone...and just out of the blue, I said, "I really apologize for a lot of the things that I did as a kid. I'm sorry,"...and he was like, "You don't have to apologize. I know you feel bad and I feel bad too," and we just...connected. That one moment we had on the phone there, it was a really good moment for us. It was awesome... We've really made some* *incredible gains... We don't have that kind of really tight brother[ly] relationship, but we are communicating now... I'm amazed that I can say that my brother and I have a friendship now because it was void for so long...*

Sandy: *We kind of look back at [our relationship] and laugh now. Like, we say, "Oh yeah, it was so funny," whenever we look at things from the past. [But] things just sort of worked out...and we became best friends.*

Beth: *[Our relationship] has gotten better. Since...I think when he got out of high school, it's [been] better and we can just kind of understand each other a little bit more and I accept him [more now].*

Although these positive experiences have a very broad range, from slight improvements for Beth, to being "best friends" for Sandy, they do serve as a foundation for a closer relationship in the future, as well as building hope that the relationship will continue to improve as time goes on. This could be extremely reassuring for siblings in the community or in counselling who have fractured sibling relationships; by disseminating findings of studies such as this, other instigators may be given more hope and optimism for the future of their own sibling relationship by reading that sibling relationships characterized by maltreatment can and do improve over time. It would also be important for the counsellor to describe the resolution of a dysfunctional sibling relationship as a process, which may take some time, so that the client can see progress and hope wherever he/she is on the pathway of building a closer sibling relationship (Sandmaier, 1994).

Difficulties continue in the present. It is unfortunate that in the majority of the stories described in this study, there continues to be sibling difficulties and "friction" in the present, despite the gains that were described in the previous section. Thus, despite having desires for a closer relationship, many of the participants express hopelessness at ever having this realized.

Nancy: *We don't yell as much, but it's still happening, like when I went home at Christmas. Which is sort of dumb. We're still pretty much the same [as we used to be].*

Beth: *He's just frustrating. We don't ever blow up [now]...[there's] never name-calling or anything like that. But it's the same thing... There's still problems... I would really like to have a close relationship with him, but...it just doesn't seem like that's an option. I foresee in the future that we'll still be close, but we'll never have that...kind of intimate relationship.*

In contrast, others are so grateful for the gains that have been made that they are able to maintain hope despite the presence of some difficulties.

Jeremy: *I remember thinking, [I don't know] how many times, "We're brothers. We shouldn't be doing this." I'd always keep saying, "This isn't right. I don't...feel comfortable with this part of my life. I need to have more with my brother and I want to have more..." I remember that I tried... I tried to hang out with him and his friends and [it] never happened. [And] that just pissed me off. Pushed me away. I thought for sure when we were older, [when] we settled down, got married and had kids, that we'd never, ever communicate or get along. I'm happy to say where we are now is really improving. I don't know who to thank, but I'm really happy that I can say that I kept hoping for something and [it's starting to happen]. There is still friction, we argue, but...things are pretty good and I'm really happy that thing are getting better now.*

When considering this theme, it is important to realize that some rifts in the sibling relationship may never be mended, whether it be due to a lack of willingness, incompatibility between personalities, a reluctance to change, or the wounds being too deep (Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994). These authors state that it would be essential to address this issue in counselling, as any desires for a closer sibling relationship may not be realized and the client will then need to deal with his/her feelings of loss and grief at the possibility of never having as close or intimate a sibling relationship as he/she was hoping for. Thus, while encouraging the client to make an attempt at bridging the distance, it would also be important to prepare them for a variety of outcomes and work through any resulting hurt, anger, or resentment that may occur if the relationship does not improve to the client's satisfaction. This would involve a thorough exploration of the client's expectations and goals, and adjusting those expectations that seem to be unrealistic (Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994). The counsellor may also attempt to address these issues in therapy with both siblings present, as they can then be aided in forgiving one another, developing appropriate ways of communicating, and getting support as they work to improve their relationship.

Summary of common themes. Through the presentation of the above themes, it becomes apparent that the participants shared many of the same interpretations of their experiences, despite having very different personalities, backgrounds, and family circumstances. Taken together, these themes can be used to develop an overall story of being the instigator of sibling maltreatment, which includes "constant" fighting over issues of territory, individuality, and responsibility, as well as feelings of competitiveness or jealousy. While these participants acknowledge being the instigators of negative interactions, they seem to be struggling with the definition of their treatment of their sibling: whether it would be called abuse, whether it caused any damage, and whether they could have handled their disputes differently. Through these struggles, the instigators also seem to be engaging in a process of minimization or denial, claiming that the maltreatment was mutual and that these types of negative interactions are simply an inevitable aspect of the sibling relationship.

There were also themes which related to the role of the parents, in that many of them intervened inappropriately, if at all, and some modeled negative behaviour or displayed blatant favouritism. Thus, many of the participants indicated that when they have their own children, they plan to conduct themselves somewhat differently, in order to avoid the development of any extreme negative interactions between their children. An additional finding was the fact that although many of the participants indicated some positive aspects to the sibling relationship, as well as an improvement in the quality of the relationship over time, many expressed a hopelessness over ever having a close bond with their brother or sister. Thus, some are left with regrets and a "void" in their lives, while other were able to overcome their differences and develop a strong relationship with a great deal of hope for the future.

This overall picture, or metastory, of the experience of instigating sibling maltreatment would be helpful for counsellors in gaining a greater understanding of this phenomenon, as it provides insight into the perspective and feelings of the instigator, contributing factors to the development of sibling maltreatment, the parents' role, and ways in which the family may be helped to intervene on a dysfunctional sibling relationship. This is not only helpful in gaining understanding and awareness of this phenomenon, but it would be helpful in the development of treatment goals while working with this population. In the following sections, I will present unique aspects of the phenomenon and paradigm cases, which will contribute further to these counselling implications.

Unique Aspects of the Phenomenon

In addition to the commonalities that are shared between participants, as shown through the presentation of themes and exemplars, there are also important unique aspects of the phenomenon which need to be elucidated. Although these unique aspects were only present for one of the participants in this study, they tie into the previous literature in this area and may carry important meanings for those who have been instigators of sibling maltreatment but were not involved in this study. In addition, although it is important to describe commonalities or shared aspects of an interpreted experience, it is also imperative to honor the individualized aspect of a phenomenon, as each person will interpret their experiences differently, having different reactions and creating different meanings depending on his/her background, beliefs, values, and personality (Walker, 1996). This is similar to what is seen in counselling, as the counsellor needs to respect the individualized reactions and effects of an experience, while at the same time appreciating the commonalities that are inherent with a particular issue. Thus, in order to fully interpret and understand the experience of sibling maltreatment, one must explore both the commonalities and the unique aspects involved.

The first notable unique aspect of the phenomenon was the finding that one of the participants became involved in several incidences of extra-familial aggression. In particular, Jeremy reported having many physical fights with peers at school or on his sports teams, beginning in early childhood and lasting into adulthood.

Jeremy: *I was like a time bomb about to go off. When I was younger, playing junior hockey, if I had no shoes [for example], I'd just go off like that (snaps fingers). I'd just become mad at people around. I think that's a lot like [what happened with] my brothers. I [got] in many, many fights. More as a kid, I'd get into fights. I think the last fight was a year and a half ago and I got my nose broken.*

While he attributed this behaviour to his personality traits, such as a lack of patience and a "quick fuse," this behaviour may have also been due to a generalization of aggressive behaviour from what had been learned within the family (Dunn, 1984; Finkelhor & Dzuiba-Leatherman, 1994; Fried, 1997; Gully et al., 1981; Loeber et al., 1983; Perry et al., 1992; Steinmetz, 1978; Truscott, 1989; Widom, 1998). This is an extremely important finding, as it lends support to the belief that one of the most serious ramifications of being the instigator of sibling maltreatment is the maintenance of aggression into other interpersonal relationship as the child gets older (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Garcia et al., 2000; Frude, 1993; Gully et al., 1981; Koski, 1987; Loeber et al., 1983; Patterson et al., 1984; Stormshak et al., 1996). Thus, it would be imperative for some sort of intervention to occur in childhood, in order to avoid such a deleterious outcome (Widom, 1998). This is especially important in light of the recent increase in youth violence, which may be partly attributable to violent behaviour shaped by an aggressive sibling relationship.

Another finding that emerged from Jeremy's story of sibling maltreatment was his tremendous feelings of superiority over his brothers, which resulted in feelings of "hatred" and contempt and likely led to an escalation or continuation of negative interactions between them.

Jeremy: *I have no idea why I never liked my brothers when I was young... I honestly felt superior to them. I always had it in the back of my mind that...my brother's a stupid moron. I honestly believed he would never amount to anything. For years, I just kept going over it in my mind, just, like, "Forget it...I don't want to be friends with [him]. I don't want to." I remember being angry sometimes*

> *and just, "I can't wait until [he] moves out because I hate him." We basically hated each other. I couldn't stand looking at Alex. I was so happy when he wasn't in the house.*

This aspect of the experience is notable not only for the sheer degree of hostility and animosity that Jeremy claims he felt for his brother as a child, but also for the implications it holds for how he would be expected to interact with them (Bryant, 1992; Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992). As described by Bank and colleagues (1996), instigators of violent interactions often develop a "firmly entrenched disregard for those they can victimize" (p. 221), which may lead to more violence as the instigator lacks any sort of empathy or remorse and comes to believe that the victim "deserves" it. Thus, it would be important for parents and counsellors to be aware of this tendency in aggressive children and intervene appropriately if they observe a child displaying any signs of contempt, disgust, or dislike for his/her sibling. If this type of reaction is observed, it would be necessary for the child to become involved in therapy in order to deal with his or her feelings and learn empathy and perspective taking through role playing exercises, symbolic play, or other therapeutic techniques (Wiehe, 1997a).

Another notable unique aspect of the phenomenon was one that was described by Nancy, as she was often involved in a situation whereby she and another sibling would "gang up" on another, with her younger brother being the victim on most occasions.

> *Nancy:* *My older brother and I would gang up on my little brother. We'd put up pillows so he couldn't talk to us, 'cause he was a little kid so we would put up barriers so he couldn't play with us... ~~I was~~ always on the team side because I was the only girl, so it was either me and my little brother or me and my big brother, together. I would just...take sides with somebody. [The one that was ganged up on consistently was] mostly my little brother because my parents favoured him...*

This finding speaks to the complicated nature of sibling relationships and the variety of forms sibling maltreatment may take, especially when there are more than two children in the family. This raises a number of questions for future research, such as the perceptions of children who were maltreated by more than one sibling, the role of coercion in the recruitment of a sibling as the instigator of maltreatment, and the possibility that a child may be the victim of maltreatment by one sibling and the instigator of maltreatment of another. In addition, it appears that Nancy was able to displace much of the blame for the maltreatment onto her older brother, which may have kept her from fully realizing or acknowledging the extent of the damage that may have occurred for her younger brother, as well as minimizing her role in incurring such damage.

Another salient unique perspective on sibling maltreatment emerged from Beth's story, as she reported that much of the damaging behaviour she displayed with her brother was a result of her desire for some sort of response, as his indifference seemed to indicate a lack of feeling or "humanness". This was quite different from the other three participants, whose incidences of maltreatment seemed to arise largely out of a desire to control, to dominate, to be left alone, or to "shut them up," rather than for their sibling to react with emotionality.

> *Beth:* *I would try to provoke him even more, if I needed to get a response out of him. [So I would] keep trying [to] get in his face and not leave him alone... When he started shutting down I felt...I just couldn't understand that... I don't know what I was looking for, but something. It just seemed human [to show some sort of reaction]. It just seemed natural. So I always had to provoke him and get some kind of response because I didn't know how to deal with him not wanting to talk about things...*

While at first glance this finding appears to be diametrically opposed to the desires of the other three instigators in this study, on further inspection it appears that Beth's attempts to elicit a certain reaction also came out of a desire for control; she reported that she liked to "hash things out" and talk about her feelings, and she reacted very negatively to the fact that her brother did not handle conflict and negative emotions in the same way. Thus, although on the surface the dynamics between Beth and Duncan seems to differ from that of the other participants in this study, the underlying goal (of dominance, power, and control) appears to be the same. This may be useful in arriving at a satisfactory definition of sibling maltreatment; as previously written, one of the key aspects of abuse is the component of the desire for power or control over another (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Tedeschi, 1997; Wiehe, 1997b). As stated by Beth: "The more he was in control, the more I was not..." which seems to indicate that her strategy of gaining more power was to provoke him to the point where he lost control, rather than provoking him to the point of submission. This is interesting in that it highlights the fact that sibling maltreatment may take different forms, despite the fact that the underlying motivation may be the same. Parents need to be made aware of this, so that they begin to examine their children's behaviour for the underlying goal, rather than simply focusing on surface behaviours.

Another finding that is related to the previous one, is that Beth was the only participant who claimed that she had been abused by her brother, despite the fact that the majority of participants described the maltreatment as mutual. Although she acknowledges that she engaged in a more direct and active form of abuse of her brother, she states that his indifference was extremely hurtful and "neglectful" and would also be considered to be abusive.

> *Beth:* *[His lack of response to me], that's abuse...[or] neglect. The fact that he wasn't doing anything. He didn't pick on me or do anything [concrete], there just wasn't that kind of relationship I thought siblings should have. [Having that feeling of loss and feeling] that I should have something that I'd feel like I'm not getting... Yeah, that neglect would be abuse.*

This finding lends support to my previous statement in an earlier section that two siblings may be maltreating one another, though in different forms or at different times (Dunn, 1996; Klagsbrun, 1992). It also relates to the damage that can often occur when a positive relationship between siblings does not develop naturally; as stated by Bank (1988), many children have a deep desire for a loving and fulfilling relationship with their siblings, and will incur emotional damage if something so invaluable "fails to flower" (p. 345). It appears that this emotional damage may be even more serious if one child desires a close relationship and gets continually rejected by the other (Hapworth et al., 1993), which seems to be the case with Beth and Duncan. Thus, it would be important for parents and society to not only be made more aware of the damaging nature of sibling maltreatment, but also to realize the positive developmental influences that arise from a close and loving sibling relationship; by raising such an awareness parents may be encouraged to actively foster a healthy relationship between their children, as well as intervene on any damaging interactions.

The final notable unique aspect of the sibling maltreatment described in these narratives was the finding that Sandy and her sister were able to become closer through their fighting and their negative interactions. This is in direct contrast to the other participants, who described the development and maintenance of a rift between them and their siblings that was extremely difficult to surmount. As described by Sandy, in order to avoid getting in trouble, she and Karen began to hide their fighting from their parents, which eventually led to "bonding" and the development of a friendship between them.

Sandy: *...there was a lot of quiet fighting [because] sometimes when mom and dad heard it we would get in trouble, so we kind of had an agreement to keep it low so that they wouldn't find out that we were fighting...it kind of became almost a bonding thing too because then we'd start giggling and we wanted to hide it and all this sort of stuff...*

This finding is extremely surprising, as it seems to be counterintuitive that a dysfunctional relationship could be used to bring two people closer to one another. Perhaps this shows that there can be some positive aspects to sibling maltreatment, despite any damage that has also been caused. It is possible that this bonding occurred because of the strength of the sibling bond (Cicirelli, 1994; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994), as these two sisters seemed able to put their differences aside in order to protect one another from being disciplined by their parents. Alternatively, this finding may be related to feelings of guilt that these sisters may have had for their behaviour, as it appears that they had a clear feeling that their "fighting" was inappropriate and would not be approved of by their parents. A similar finding was reported in a study of the victims (Hanoski, 1998), where some participants reported that their parents were unaware of the maltreatment that was occurring and that they did not tell their parents because they did not believe it would change anything; for the instigators it appears that they would avoid telling their parents in order to avoid punishment. Thus, parents need to be extremely vigilant in observing and questioning their children, in case their children are not disclosing that maltreatment is occurring.

Presentation of Paradigm Cases

In addition to the presentation of themes, exemplars, and unique aspects, paradigm cases are helpful in the interpretation of experience as they include the presentation of meaningful transactions of a certain phenomenon. However, rather than representing particular instances or examples of a particular theme, paradigm cases involve the meaning that an individual has made for the entire experience. Thus, while themes and exemplars make up the "parts," paradigm cases account for the whole, or gestalt, of the phenomenon. In this study, paradigm cases were used to describe the meanings each participant has attached to his/her experiences of being an instigator of sibling maltreatment, which will be influenced by such factors as his/her personality, background, family constellation, family circumstances, and his/her level of acknowledgment of the seriousness of the issue. As stated by Leonard (1989), paradigm cases "embody the rich descriptive information necessary for an understanding of how an individual's actions and interpretations emerge from his or her situational context..." (p. 54).

In addition to describing each participant's individualized interpretations of his/her sibling experiences, these patterns of meaning will then be extrapolated to other clinical situations in which sibling maltreatment may be occurring. By drawing these "family resemblances" (Leonard, 1989, p. 54) between the individual and the situational context, I hope to arrive at a comprehensive description of different types of families or individuals who may be at risk for instigating sibling maltreatment. In this way, counsellors, as well as parents and other health professionals, can be made more aware of situations in which sibling maltreatment is likely to occur, and can then question the family about the presence of a dysfunctional sibling relationship and intervene appropriately when necessary. By outlining the context and contributing factors to sibling maltreatment, a greater insight and awareness of the nature of this phenomenon will be gained, and this information can then be used to educate families and develop effective intervention strategies.

As there were only four participants in this study, it is important to recognize that the following interpretations do not represent an exhaustive list of all of the family contexts and contributing factors to the instigation of sibling maltreatment. It is also important to note that my goal in providing the following descriptions is not to provide definitive examples of situations in which dysfunctional sibling relationships *will* develop; as there are so many variables involved in this phenomenon, it would be impossible to provide scenarios in which sibling maltreatment will unequivocally occur. Instead, my aim is to provide possible family contexts and situations which may create an environment where sibling maltreatment is more likely to occur. As I stated in an earlier study (Hanoski, 1998), this is similar to cases of child sexual abuse, as there are many client characteristics and symptoms which the counsellor needs to be aware of, as they *may* be indicative of previous abuse; however, it would be unethical to believe that every client with these characteristics is an abuse survivor.

Jeremy. Jeremy's experiences of sibling maltreatment can be attributed to a number of factors, including Jeremy's lack of patience and "short fuse," basic personality differences between him and his brother, a high level of competition and jealousy, and the adoption of a "parental" role. His story is quite contradictory, as he claims to have regrets over his behaviour and can name negative effects of the maltreatment for his brother; however, he later negates this by stating that the maltreatment was mutual and that he was not to blame. Overall, it seems that Jeremy believes that negative interactions between siblings are inevitable and that no serious harm was ever caused through his treatment of his brother. He seems to have made sense of his entire sibling experience by stating that overcoming sibling difficulties is simply a matter of maturing, "growing up" and learning how to interact in a more positive manner. Since he has experienced a number of "turning points" and positive experiences with his brothers in recent years, he is left with a great deal of hope that they will continue to strengthen their bond in the future.

> *Jeremy:* *All of us were really progressing out of our...phase. Alex kind of grew up... I had to really grow up too, I think. In the last few years I have kind of shifted my outlook on life quite a bit. I think it was just a matter of time for all of us to grow as individuals, [to] where we would all get along. It just took time. I think the biggest thing is that it was just a progression for each individual personality in the family, finally to get to a certain point, where we can all get along. It would have been nice if it had been... when we were kids, but it didn't happen until I was in my 20s [because] we just weren't ready really to be brothers yet. We weren't ready to get along.*
>
> *I'm really proud of my brothers [now] and really happy for them. I'm really happy... that I have brothers that I can be proud of... I can honestly say I love them [both] a lot now. I think we've really made some incredible gains. There is still friction, we argue, but...things are pretty good and I'm really happy that things are getting better...*

One of the main aspects of Jeremy's story that stands out is the extremely high level of normalization and minimization that is occurring, which would be consistent with most societal and familial viewpoints of sibling relationships (Gelles, 1997; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996). Thus, despite his description of extremely frequent and intense verbal and physical maltreatment, Jeremy maintains the belief that such behaviour is "normal" and inevitable, as well as acceptable in the context of the sibling relationship. The prevalence of this belief is extremely important, due to the fact that it almost gives the children permission to behave in such a way and provides them with an excuse to absolve themselves of any responsibility for behaving inappropriately. This belief also speaks to the difficulty involved in intervening on a dysfunctional sibling relationship, particularly when parents also hold the belief that this kind of damaging behaviour is acceptable.

This story is also related to family situations in which children learn inappropriate behaviours that have been modeled by their parents (Brody & Stoneman, 1994; Cicirelli, 1995; Freeman, 1993; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Graham-Bermann et al., 1994; Herzberger, 1996; Jorgenson, 1986; Kashani et al., 1992; Katz et al., 1992; Steinmetz, 1977a; Train, 1993; Wiehe, 1998; Withecomb, 1997); in Jeremy's case, it is possible that the corporal punishment that his father engaged in may have contributed to a climate in which physical maltreatment became more acceptable. Furthermore, Jeremy's story indicated that he had a very "responsible" role in the family, which may have also contributed to the instigation of maltreatment, as he likely felt that he was "in charge" and had the authority to "punish" his brothers. Thus, it is very important that parents provide adequate supervision of their children and avoid allocating too much responsibility to any one child (Wiehe, 1998).

Finally, this story also relates to the concept of sibling rivalry, as Jeremy indicated that he felt somewhat jealous and competitive with his brother; this may have led to an escalation in rivalry to the point of violence (Leung & Robson, 1991; Rosenthal & Doherty, 1984; Wiehe, 1998). Although this was partly due to personality traits that Jeremy envied in his brother, there was an additional component to this finding, as Jeremy also developed a feeling of superiority over his brothers, due to traits and interests that he had that his brothers did not. While this may have been a form of compensation for the areas in which he felt he was lacking (Kingston & Prior, 1995; Train, 1993), this feeling of superiority and righteousness may have also led to feelings of "hatred" and contempt, which likely led to a further escalation of maltreatment (Bank et al., 1996; Bryant, 1992; Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992).

It is quite surprising that Jeremy and Alex have been able to begin to mend their differences and build a closer relationship. While this may be due to the fact that the maltreatment was mutual, it may also be due to the development of maturity and Jeremy's ability to better manage his anger and impatience. It is also interesting to note that as Jeremy's father got older, he began to "mellow out" and become less reactive; perhaps this modeling of a calmer, more patient way of being had a positive influence on Jeremy's aggressive tendencies. Another important factor is the fact that despite his reluctance to admit that any damage was incurred through his treatment of his brother, he has also taken great steps in analyzing his behaviour, discussing it with Alex, and apologizing for some of the past treatment of his brother; perhaps this outward acknowledgment and remorse has contributed to Jeremy's ability to mend his differences with Alex and move forward in a more positive way (Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994). This holds important implications for counsellors working with this population, as it may provide direction with regard to healing and resolution.

Nancy. According to Nancy, much of the dissension that occurred between her and her younger brother was due to the differential treatment he received from their parents. Although she attributes the maltreatment to other factors as well, such as feelings of boredom and the learning of negative behaviours (such as yelling) from her mother, she cites favouritism as the main reason for their negative interactions, as she felt a great deal of anger and resentment towards her brother for this. The differential treatment has continued to the present day, which has resulted in continued feelings of resentment, despite the presence of a relatively amicable relationship between her and her brother.

Nancy: *[The one that was ganged up on consistently was] mostly [Larry] because my parents favoured him, so we'd get kind of mad over that. They would just give him whatever he wanted... Even now, they send him cookies in the mail and stuff like that. He even knew it...he'd totally use it and get what he wanted... It really, really bothered us... Especially when I was a kid, it would really eat into me... They know that Steve and I think that they favoured Larry, but they don't think they do.*

Steve and I have talked about what we did and we even joke...we laugh at it.

> *[But] we're not [completely] out in the open. We just got together a month ago. We don't yell as much, but it's still happening... Larry and I, we just sit around and talk. He's still a little selfish or whatever and he annoys me, and we're still pretty much the same [as we used to be].*

Although this family situation has some elements which are similar to the previous one, such as the finding that the children may have begun to model behaviour that was displayed by their parents and there were some elements of an escalation in sibling rivalry, the main component of this story is the favouritism that was perceived by Nancy and her older brother, which may have resulted in "ganging up" on the favoured child out of a sense of competition or due to feelings of resentment (Brody & Stoneman, 1994; Brody & Stoneman, 1996; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Cicirelli, 1994; Dunn, 1988; Green, 1984; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Reid & Donovan, 1990; Ross & Milgram, 1982; Sandmaier, 1994; Vandell & Bailey, 1992; Volling & Elins, 1998). As this differential treatment is still being carried out in the present, and the parents refuse to acknowledge that they are favouring one child over the others, it appears that these feelings of anger, resentment, and competitiveness may be carried into adulthood, making resolution very difficult. Thus, one would predict that in such a situation, siblings would remain somewhat estranged from one another unless this issue was brought out into the open and resolved.

Beth. Beth has attributed much of the negativity in her relationship with her brother to a basic personality clash, as she wants to work out their differences and he desperately tries to avoid having any kind of conflict. According to her, she often began to engage in maltreatment out of a need for some sort of reaction from her brother; she states that this was largely due to a desire to resolve the issue, as well as to see that her brother had emotions and was "human." It may also be possible that she equated an emotional response with feelings of love and caring, as his lack of response was continually hurtful to her. A power struggle often ensued, with a continuing cycle of pursuit and distancing, until Beth reached the point of concession. She also attributes some of the negativity to other factors, such as resentment over being given too much responsibility, as well as feelings of competitiveness due to the belief that her brother was the "perfect child" and was favoured by her parents. As his patterns of withdrawal and avoidance have continued into adulthood, Beth is experiencing much of the same difficulties as she did while she was growing up and does not hold much hope that they will be capable of forging a closer relationship in the future.

Beth: *...we're kind of opposite. I'm kind of emotional, verbal, and my brother is very withdrawn and very...I don't want to use the word cold, but he's very non-emotional...[and] reserved... It would always be the same... I would start talking to him and he would just kind of shut down and I didn't think that was appropriate and I'd kind of start picking on him and following him and...he'd always try to leave... [I would] try to provoke him even more, if I needed to get a response out of him. [So I would] keep trying [to] get in his face and not leave him alone. I...thought that nothing bothered him...thought he didn't have feelings. He was kind of non-emotional and that was almost disturbing, to see someone who's very...always seemingly in control. He would never react...*

[Our relationship] has gotten better... we can just kind of understand each other a little bit more and I accept him [more now]. He [does have] the same kind of tendencies [as when we were younger]. Maybe not to the [same] extreme, but [he's] still very avoidant. We get along and we can go to movies and do stuff together and it's nice, but still frustrating...he's kind of aloof to a lot of things. We don't ever blow up [now]...but it's the same thing. There's still problems. It's better now...he talks a little bit more and he's a little bit more open, but I can't see that changing [much more in the future].

This family context is similar to the previous ones, in that this is a situation where the instigating child believes that the parents are favouring a sibling, which may have led to maltreatment due to feelings of jealousy, resentment, or rejection. In this situation there also seems to be a high level of sibling rivalry, which may be due in part to the child's perception of differential treatment, but may also be due to the belief that his/her sibling is "perfect" and has a much easier life than he/she has. Thus, feelings of jealousy and competition have escalated, leading to several acting out behaviours and much negativity between the siblings. In addition, this seems to be a situation where the instigating sibling could be characterized as a reactive bully, who feels justified in reacting aggressively to behaviour from others that he/she interprets as being malicious (Fried, 1997). This also speaks to the concept of mutuality (Dunn 1996; Klagsburn, 1992), as it seems that in this case, although Beth acknowledges the abuse she engaged in against Duncan, she also indicated that she felt as though she was abused by him as well.

The parents in this family are also having an influence on the quality of the sibling relationship, due to ineffective intervention strategies and avoidance of teaching their children more appropriate conflict resolution strategies (Brody & Stoneman, 1987; Reid & Donovan, 1990; Train, 1993; Wiehe, 1998). As the children have never been taught these coping mechanisms, it is likely that their relationship will continue in much the same fashion as in childhood unless some sort of intervention is employed and they are provided with an opportunity to learn more adaptive methods of communication.

Sandy. Sandy believes that the negative interactions between her and her sister occurred largely because of the fact that they were very similar and did not have an opportunity to exert their individuality and separateness, since, as young children, they shared a bedroom, wore similar clothes, spent most of their time together, and had common interests. She claims that as they grew into adolescence and were given an opportunity to develop their own interest and areas in which to excel, as well as having separate bedrooms and their own "space," their relationship improved a great deal. In fact, in the present, she states that they have become "best friends" and are extremely close.

Sandy: *We were just too much the same... When we were younger it was just really tense because we shared a bedroom...we had the same clothes and everything. It just didn't work...the two of us were always together. We never had time apart... Then, as we just kind of got older it [got better]... When we got up into high school we started to see some differences...we started to build our individual differences and it was good that they were different from each other. Once we found out about our differences we got along better... Things just sort of worked out...and we became best friends.*

This situation is similar to the other family situations described previously, in that there is a high level of competition and rivalry. It is also helpful in providing suggestions for ways in which a sibling relationship characterized by highly negative interactions can be interrupted and altered to be more positive, such as by providing space from one another, encouraging individual differences, and honoring each child for his/her unique contributions and talents (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Faber & Mazlish, 1987). This family context is also similar to previous ones because of the atmosphere of tolerance and minimization of the severity and potential harm of sibling maltreatment, due to a belief that such behaviour is "normal" between siblings. As stated previously, this is a belief which needs to be challenged, as it not only contributes to a more permissive attitude towards sibling maltreatment, but it allows the instigator to justify his/her behaviour; furthermore, it is difficult to intervene and create change in a family who does not acknowledge the existence of a problem.

Summary of paradigm cases. These paradigm cases have been presented in order to identify certain family contexts in which sibling maltreatment is likely to occur, in an effort to aid counsellors and families in the identification of circumstances that may put the children at risk for instigating sibling maltreatment. In considering these paradigm cases, it is important to note that there may be other family contexts in which sibling maltreatment may occur, which have not been described here due to the limited number of participants in this exploratory study. Thus, it would be important to explore additional family contexts that contribute to sibling maltreatment in future studies.

As shown through the paradigm cases, each of the participants emphasized certain points and meanings that they made of their experiences; however, there were several commonalities in their interpretations, which have also been found in other studies or theoretical discussions of the potential causes of a dysfunctional sibling relationship. This includes such findings as the central role of the parents, whether it be through providing adequate supervision, modeling appropriate conflict resolution strategies, ensuring they do not engage in differential treatment, or being aware of the escalation of sibling rivalry (Bryant, 1992; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Cicirelli, 1994; Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Green, 1984; Hapworth et al., 1993; Herzberger, 1996; Kashani et al., 1992; Klagsbrun, 1992; Leung & Robson, 1991; Rosenthal & Doherty, 1984; Ross & Milgram, 1982; Sandmaier, 1994; Snyder & Schrepferman, 1997; Straus et al., 1980; Wiehe, 1997b). Another important finding drawn from the presentation of paradigm cases was the fact that the attitude whereby sibling maltreatment is normalized and accepted seems to be very common, which is supported by the literature in this area as well (Brody et al., 1992; Felson, 1983; Graham-Bermann & Cutler, 1994; Gelles, 1997; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996; Montemayor & Hanson, 1985; Newman, 1994; Roscoe et al., 1987; Straus et al., 1980; Wiehe, 1998). This highlights the importance of the raising of awareness of the existence and potential damaging effects of this phenomenon.

These paradigm cases have also been helpful in highlighting ways in which these sibling relationships have become more positive over time, which provides insight for parents into ways this can be accomplished, such as by fostering differences, teaching appropriate methods of communication, and allowing the children space and time from one another (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Faber & Mazlish, 1987). If carried into adulthood, it seems that a negative sibling relationship can be healed and resolved if the instigators are able to acknowledge and apologize for any hurtful behaviour they engaged in as children and adolescents (Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994).

Taken together, the themes, exemplars, unique aspects, and paradigm cases provide a thorough description of the phenomenon of sibling maltreatment from the instigators' point of view. While this is invaluable information, due to the fact that this is the first study to specifically address the perceptions, interpretations, and feelings of the instigators, many would raise the question of whether the siblings of these four participants would tell the same story if they were permitted to tell their side. In an effort to explore the differing views and perceptions of a sibling dyad, we will now turn to the stories of a brother/sister pair who both agreed to take part in this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

Data Analysis: The Sibling Dyad

In this chapter, I present the narratives for the brother/sister pair who was recruited for this study, in order to provide "both sides of the story" and gain a greater understanding of the varying perceptions and experiences of two siblings from the same family. It was my hope that by including a sibling dyad, I would be able to provide a detailed description of the dynamics of one particular sibling relationship and the manner in which a conflicted sibling relationship develops and changes over time. I also wanted to explore the differences that may emerge, depending on whether the story is told by the victim or by the instigator. The stories in this section were analyzed in a similar way as the instigators' stories in the previous chapter, with the two stories being contrasted and compared to one another in order to derive common themes and unique aspects of the phenomenon. Although exemplars and paradigm cases are also provided for each sibling in this chapter, the main area of focus is on the similarities and differences between the two stories, as my aim in this phase of the study was more on the varying perceptions and beliefs of a victim and instigator, rather than on their individual experiences of the phenomenon.

The Narratives

Jack's Story

Jack, who is a 21 year old university student, has a younger sister named Jill, who is 19 years of age. Overall, they seem to have a close, positive relationship, despite the fact that their history includes a period where they fought with one another very frequently. Jack describes their relationship as going through a variety of phases, starting with a good friendship when they were in their younger years. However, as they got older, they went into another phase, where they began to argue with one another on a regular basis.

> *...when we were really young, we got along. Like, when she was five, kind of those younger years, we always played together and there wasn't...too much conflict. There's pictures of us, you know, the bath pictures together, the whole thing, where we really got along quite well. I think of it kind of like going through cycles...you know, [we were] young, we were pals and [then] those hormones brought us to a breaking point...we started to get older and I matured and she matured...and there was a little more verbal interaction between the two of us. Arguing, getting on each other's nerves, that kind of thing... We fought pretty often at that time... [about] three times a week. On weekends more because we weren't in school.*

Jack describes the worst period as during junior high.

> *In junior high it was kind of tough...a little more arguing and stuff like that. We were in each other's hair quite a bit. Lots of, "I want to watch TV and you're watching TV." Little things that would escalate into big arguments. We never were [in the same school]. [Which is good, because] I wouldn't have treated her with respect in the hallway or [anything like that]. I think there would have been more fights at home [too], because stuff from school would have carried over into the home.*

Jack describes the conflict as becoming so severe that at one time he and his sister were spending little to no time together.

> *There was a stage where we didn't really [spend any time together], other than being with the family and seeing each other, there wasn't anything outside the family [that] we'd go and [do together]. There was a stage where we weren't friends. Now we can go to a movie or hang out or something like that. We couldn't do that then. It was just stay away because we really hurt each other when we were fighting.*

Although the fighting was mainly verbal in nature, Jack states that there were also occasions when their negative verbal interactions would escalate into physical ones.

> *[It was] mostly verbal. We knew how to push each other's buttons. We had a little scrap here and there...she's given me a fat lip before. It's never been to the point of serious blows or anything like that...it was basic kid punches...we'd punch each other in the arm...that kind of thing, but mostly verbal. Nothing really severe as far as cursing or cussing. We were...getting red in the face and we were yelling a bit and that kind of thing. At the most, doors slamming, yelling at each other through doors and that type of thing...[and] I'd try and tell her certain...hurtful things. I always wanted an older brother, so I'd tell her, "Oh, I wish we had a brother instead of you." And that was quite hurtful... [So] it never got to the point of any physical harm or*

> *anything like that, but there were some good screaming matches.*

In considering how these arguments would begin or whether he or his sister played the role of instigator, Jack expresses some confusion, stating that they each seemed to initiate at different times.

> *Jill would start it probably because I was either being lazy [or] lethargic. If she was in a bad mood, she'd let me know it. She'd let everybody know [it]...sort of like: get off the train tracks when the train's coming to you. So we each had tendencies where I would be really lethargic [or] she would get upset and let her anger out on everybody else. That's how it would kind of start. I couldn't really pinpoint that it was either I that always started the fights or [that] she would always start the fights. I'd have my days where I'd be bugging her constantly. Or she wouldn't get away from me either. I'm trying to think of some times or some examples where I'd pick a fight...but...I don't know. I'd go bug her. It probably was procrastination, where I'd pick a fight with her because I didn't want to do anything, so instead of doing my homework, I'd go bug her. Or she'd have a tough day in school so she'd come and bug me... I guess I did initiate the [physical aspects]. The push or the hit against the arm. That kind of thing. And then after that, she'd do that too, but it was probably me that initiated that [part of it]...*

At times when the conflict became very intense, Jack states that his parents would often have to intervene.

> *[My parents] always [intervened]. Mom and dad would referee a little bit. I remember [we'd] get into it and I'd hit her on the arm and she'd hit me on the arm [and] she'd be yelling to let them know that something was happening, and then they could kind of tell from our tones of voices and [if] our words started to get a little meaner, as the fight went on...they could intervene. My mom would [say], "What's the matter with you?" That kind of thing...and separate us, so that the physical wouldn't occur anymore.*

If Jack and Jill's parents weren't home, Jack reports that they would often cope with the fighting simply by separating themselves from one another. By separating and "doing their own thing," they were often able to deal with their feelings and calm down, at times getting to a point where they could apologize to one another. However, there were also times when one of them would follow the other and prevent them from being alone, which would often result in further conflict and hurtful interactions.

> *...there were times when [my parents] weren't there when we would argue... We'd [each go] in our own area...each to our corners...doors would slam...and she'd lock her door so I couldn't get in and I'd lock mine so she couldn't get in my room, and that'd be the end of the argument. There were some times where we'd separate to our corners, by ourselves, and then come back and [say] "Look, I'm sorry," and realize that we made a mistake. Or she'd come and say that she's sorry...*
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> *[For me], being involved in sports really helped. I'd go and play basketball and really be aggressive toward the basketball and to the hoop and I'd get my stress out and clear my head because of it. So it was kind of a release that way...[and helped in] dealing with [the fights]. Jill used to deal with it by just being [in her room]. Her room is kind of her haven, she's got her posters on the wall and she's got her teddy bears or whatever. She was always playing in there and that's her real time to relax...[and] she has her sports too.*
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> *When [I] entered [her room], in that time where she's cooling off, it would fuel the fire. I'd want to come in and get in there. That would fuel the fire for sure, because this was her place to get away and I would try to get in. Then the same type of thing for her. If she wanted to upset me, she'd come and play basketball or something and that would fuel the fire for me. There was a couple times where she grabbed the ball and chucked it over the fence or popped the ball or something like that. [I'd be like], "What are you doing? I want to relax and you're just ticking me off some more." So that would make me a little upset.*

Jack is able to list several reasons why he believes that a conflicted sibling relationship developed between him and Jill. One of the main reasons that he cites is the development of competition, partly because of him having more privileges from being the eldest. He also states that as they got older, Jill became quite successful in the athletic arena, which created further competition between them.

> *...we kind of went our separate ways a little bit...I think that caused conflict because I was starting to get to do some things, like learner's permits, ski trips with the school, and she was getting left behind a bit [with] me being a little more able and at the time we clashed a little bit.*
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> *I guess [there] was a little competition. We've always been involved in basketball, volleyball, soccer, track... I think I was a little high on myself...in sports and...when I entered high school...she was getting into athletics. It really came naturally to her, volleyball and stuff like that, so it may have caused a little tension there. I think from*

> *my standpoint, mom and dad weren't paying attention to me anymore because Jill was...just as driven and improving and that was kind of tough. I look back at it now and I was live, breathe, and eat sports and mom and dad were always there cheering...and now, you know, they're talking about Jill at the dinner table too. Now that I think back, I mean, they supported both of us. They were always there...but at the time I felt that [she was] taking away from my fanfare a little bit. [So] that whole competition thing...kind of pulled us apart.*

In addition, Jack believes that many of the arguments may have occurred due to an intense desire on his part to help Jill in whatever way she may have needed, whether it be with school or difficulties she was having with her friends, which she tended to interpret as criticism or attempts by Jack to pry into her business.

> *There's been some times where I think me and my mom and dad want[ed] to help...and maybe that may have caused a little [friction]...kind of negative attention... She maybe thought that we were trying to do it for her. I just remember really pushing, more than if she just asked. [It wasn't] so much that I thought I knew [everything], but I'd go, "I did it this way." That kind of thing. Like, "I did it this way and did okay...so maybe you should do it this way too." Not realizing that she may have a different way or even a better way. I thought that my way was the better way, but to her, that isn't helping.*
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> *[If she were here] she'd probably say [that I should have] mind[ed] my own business. "You were too pushy." [That] I put too much pressure on her. That kind of thing. I remember that, even if she was having problems at school, with a girl or something like that, I'd want to know what's the matter. That would kind of tick her off. [I felt like] I needed to know...but I don't need to know all her problems. [It's] different if she wants to ask me [for] advice, but I was always, "Oh, you had a bad day. I want to help." That help was probably, to her, it seemed as... pressure...just fueling the fire, so to speak. In her eyes, it was not to help her. It was to be nosy and just to...upset her even more.*

Jack believes that one of the things which was helpful in his relationship with Jill was the fact that they were involved in many outside interests and activities.

> *The thing that helped us...was that we were involved in extracurricular stuff. There wasn't that time of just sitting there at home, watching TV. And we never played video games. Our parents had us busy. Even for a close family, we had our time to get away and have our interests and that helps...*

Over time, Jack and Jill have been able to mend their differences and have become much closer over the years. Jack is able to name several reasons for this, such as becoming more mature, gaining a greater understanding of one another, having common interests, and supporting one another's unique talents.

> *...we're maturing individually and as a family too...getting to know each other. When we were younger, we didn't really know... [it was] "I know how to push so-and-so's buttons." So you do know how to push those buttons and when you get older, you can always push those buttons, [but you don't do it]. Like, for what? [To] disrupt the whole household? I don't want to get into a big argument.*
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> *I know my sister now. Before you get in an argument, she needs time to cool off. Where sometimes I'll want it [resolved] right away, [but] I know that she needs to cool off for a while before she can talk about it. [And] I understand that...each individual's an individual and we're all working toward different things and that kind of thing...and you have to understand that.*
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> *We've [both] always been involved in athletics. So we always shared that kind of stuff and she's always come to watch my stuff. Jill plays on a volleyball team. I understand the commitment she has for volleyball. And I'm in marathons and triathalons and she comes to watch me finish those. So we kind of appreciate that we each have our own...little sport. [It's better] now that she's got her thing and I've got mine. We're [even] in different faculties, so again, there's kind of different interests there that...probably helps. I'm not there going, "Oh, when I took this course I did this." She's kind of finding her own path and I think giving her advice...generally I don't do that kind of thing [anymore].*

In addition, Jack states that one of the main ways that they became closer was through a family crisis, where their mother was diagnosed with leukemia. He states that not only did they have to rely on one another to deal with this situation, but they also learned that there are more important things to worry about in life than the trivial matters they tended to argue over.

> *Unfortunately, our mom was diagnosed with acute leukemia when I was in grade 11 and [Jill] would be...[in] grade 9. So we kind of got a little closer then 'cause my mom and dad went to [another city] and they went there for about 6 months. We had people staying with us...so we really became quite close. That incident really brought us together. We had grandma staying for a week and our aunt staying for a week, just so that someone could be there for us. There was some times when we were there alone and we kind of had to...like, when the chips are down, come together and work together to solve our problems. I had to make sure she was at practices and she kind of*

> *made sure I was doing my thing and we all kind of worked together through it. I think what happened with my mom really brought us closer together. I think we're stronger now because of what we've been through. We're too close now to let that kind of stuff bother us now...I mean, what we've gone through as a family, I mean, that's more important than [the conflict we used to have].*

In looking back at his relationship with his sibling, Jack can see several regrets that he has and changes that he would make in their relationship if he were given the opportunity. In fact, he recalls feeling regret as a youngster immediately after the fights would occur.

> *We felt, "Why the heck did I say that? I mean, this is my sister who I love or this is my brother or my mom or dad who I love and why would I say that to people I love?" There was times where [we'd] both be crying, "I'm sorry," or "I didn't mean it." You kind of get over that ego part and you're humbled. Kind of, "Look, you're still my sister and I still love you."*

> *...I didn't enjoy that last little bit because I was such a jerk... If I could go back...I wouldn't be like that. I wish I wasn't as pushy. I realize [now] how hard that was...and me wanting to help [her] doesn't [really] help. When I was there, it just made it worse and I understand that now. If I could go back again...I wouldn't be smothering her, trying to help the way I wanted to. If she need[ed] a hug or something, then I would give her a hug, [but] not always give my psychological opinion on everything.*

Abuse would be defined by Jack as any behaviour that:

> *...is hurtful. [If it's directed towards] someone's physical attributes or the way they are, [their personal] characteristics. [For example], being called lazy. I know that I was lazy and can be [lazy], but it hurts to hear it from other people in a certain way. [It] really hurts when you hear it from your own family. Like, "If these people are saying this stuff..." You're going, "What the heck? If I can't be comfortable in my [own] house," you know. That kind of thing.*

In considering whether the conflict they experienced would be labeled "abuse," Jack states that much of the verbal interaction between them was abusive, as it was quite hurtful.

> *I can remember saying stuff...you'd say something to her and...you'd go to your room crying type of thing because when you think about it later after you've cooled down, and to actually say something like that, where you'd say, as a kid..."I wish you weren't*

> *my sister." That kind of thing. There were a few times where we'd say something, you know, "That's why the guys don't like you," or my sister [would say], "That's why you don't have a girlfriend right now," and you know, keep talking like that. There'd be times where we'd use that to kind of feel more power, that kind of...I'm going to prey on your weakness or something like that. In the heat of the moment, you'd feel like you'd accomplished something but then when you think about it... I mean, that's hurtful stuff to say.*
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> *I think abuse for us was more [verbal]. The verbal stuff was really awful in some instances, what we said to each other. There was times where I'd hit my sister in the arm or...where I'd get hit kind of thing, but it was never physical to that extent where we had to be broken up because I was going to hurt her or she was going to hurt me. I mean, she gave me a couple fat lips, but that was just by mistake. We probably crossed the line of abuse where we were hurtful to each other more [verbally]. We knew how hurtful it was, because we were bawling after. We understood how bad we had made the other person feel...'cause all that stuff she's going through, I'm going through too and I know what kind of pain that is. [So] the abuse would probably cross the line verbally...and that's wrong because it's hurtful. It was more in hurting pride and hurting...our character and that kind of stuff as kids. It was really hurtful.*

Jack is also able to name some negative effects of these interactions, many of which continue to crop up as he and his sister enter their adult years.

> *...deep in the back...in the back of our thoughts, for some reason, if there's a girl or guy we're kind of interested in and they're not showing interest back, [I think], "Maybe Jill was right." Or you start to think, [although] not hugely on either of our parts, like to a huge extent, but there's that little...you know, after a rough day, you start to believe what was said [back then]. [But] you kind of shake it off and have a better day tomorrow.*

Despite his regrets and these negative effects, Jack also believes that much of their fighting and negativity was unavoidable, largely due to the nature of the sibling relationship.

> *...as far as the fights we had, I mean those were fights. Big fights. If I could go back it would probably still be the same way. Not to the point of pushing, but still, [siblings] get on each other's nerves and it's that time where you're growing up...I think a lot of kids in...those teen years, they really experience a lot of [conflict]... As a kid, you say some hurtful stuff to your sibling.*

He is also able to name several positive aspects of the arguments he had with

Jill, such as learning many different things, as well as becoming stronger through his sibling experiences.

> *...it was a real learning kind of thing, because I realized that [I'm] not the top dog...that Jill, the way society is, she better do this on her own too. I'd be more than happy to do anything to give her a hand, but she's got to learn to do some things for herself too and I was...trying to help her out all the time. You've got to let them find their own way sometimes too. Let them learn things by themselves. I like to help her out but not to the extent that I did before... She's still my sister and I'm still protective of her, but it's not the same for me. Even now, if we're at the bar and she's talking to some friends, I kind of want to say, "Who's that guy you're dancing with?" [But] she's a big girl. If there was a problem she'd let me know. I guess I've come a long way in that area...*

> *...we're maturing. I would never use anything against her now, like if she's having a rough day or whatever. I think we both think now before we [act]. If I know I'm in a bad mood, I'll go for a long run and think it off and...sweat it out...so that I don't take it out on other people. Because of my interactions in my family, I feel confident in interacting with people. Just in general. Not only towards her, but to other people I meet. I don't feel shy. I can stick up for myself. If something's happened or if I feel that something's not right, I will let someone know in a way that won't sound hurtful. And if [someone] wants to argue with me about something, you kind of have to...just step back and think what they're going through too as you deal with that problem. You've got to try to understand where they're coming from so you come out looking like the better person. There's no point in screaming at them. Nothing's solved. If somebody wants to yell at me or something like that, they're not going to be mean to the point where I'm going to yell back at them. I think that may have been because of learning that at home, and [then] carry[ing] that outside of the house.*

> *[I'd] hate to have grown up in a perfect household where there is no fights because eventually people have to...deal with that and if you don't know how to deal with that, then you tend to be more hurtful. I think you need to be taught how to combat. I think probably me and my sister are better at that because of what we've gone through. I hope to have kids and when I do, I think they're going to go through those kinds of problems too, but I hope that there can be a time where they're really close and good friends. [But] you want your kids to...not make huge mistakes, but make mistakes to learn from them and understand different things. If they're having arguments with their brothers or their sisters or their mom and dad, in the future with friends they can learn how to deal with that. I think that's really important to learn.*

In the present, Jack and Jill are quite good friends, and try to spend time together and support one another. However, they still do argue on occasion.

> *We do things together. We spend time with each other outside of the family, going to movies or out to a bar for a couple drinks with our friends. I think that...being able to...get out of the house and do something together, whether it's walking around the mall shopping or something, it really helps... Some people aren't friends with their siblings. They're just, "I love my brother 'cause he's my brother and not 'cause he's my pal or my friend." [Whereas for us], I mean, she's one of my good friends now. It's neat to know that the both of us are at the same institution and we see each other through the hallways and we stop and talk. I consider her one of my good friends and I hope she considers me a good pal too. We don't always [say], "I love you," and that kind of thing, but in subtle ways, I know that I love her... I think we're lucky that we know each other.*
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> *As far as conflict now, I mean there's little things. Everybody gets stressed but there's no really big, extreme interactions. We still have our conflicts. There's times when I get on my sister's nerves still and she gets on mine, but we know how to deal with it in a better way. There's not that big extreme there, [with] doors slamming or that kind of thing. Like I said, that comes with maturity and going through those times...*

Jack's love and pride for Jill is evident when he talks about her, and he seems to be carrying a great deal of hope for their relationship in the future.

> *I feel really lucky to have had...my sister as a good friend of mine. I cherish that. I know when she's playing volleyball and I'm hoping the best for her and I'm so excited when she does well. I'm proud of her. For her birthday, I bought her some flowers, [just to say], "Jill, I'm proud you're my sister." I'm glad I have Jill and the way she is. I'd do anything for my sister. If she needed a kidney or something, I'd give it to her right away without thinking twice. I always wanted...a younger brother, but I wouldn't trade Jill for the world.*

Jill's Story

Jill is a 19 year old university student. She has an older brother, Jack, who is 21 years of age. For the most part, Jill believes that they have had quite a good relationship, although as a young child she mainly just took him for granted.

> *We've always gotten along pretty well. I'd play with him and his friends and we'd play together...so, we've always been pretty good friends. I don't think I appreciated Jack as much until I got a little older. He was just sort of there. I guess that's what I thought. [He was] just someone to play with...fool around with and get into trouble with. We usually got along most of the time.*

Jill discounts much of her conflict with Jack due to the fact that it was over trivial matters. Despite this, she states that the fighting occurred on a fairly frequent basis.

> *We always fought about dumb things...like, who got what or sharing and stuff. It's usually who has to wash the floor or who has to vacuum. "I don't want to do it." "Well, I don't want to do it," and then we'd just get in a fight. Or I'd say something to him and he'd get really mad...but, not that much. It was pretty much all dumb stuff that we fought about. Most of the time it was the small, little [things]. Chores and taking each other's stuff. Things usually that siblings probably fight over, most of the time. [It happened] a couple times a week maybe, but they...weren't that big.*

However, at times, Jill claims that she and Jack did have "big" fights.

> *...usually the big fights are when we don't agree with each other on things. Maybe if one of us did something that the other one didn't agree with. Or he does something and I don't agree with it. Then we have big fights. Usually that's what it is, [different values or opinions]. That's usually when we have big fights. [For example], there was one a while ago. I wanted to go to my friend's [house at the] lake, and my dad said I wasn't allowed to go. I decided I was going to go anyways, and Jack was like, "If you go, I'm going to tell on you," and we just got into this big huge fight...and we just fought about it and I just left. When I left, he was so mad...*

She states that much of the fighting that occurred was verbal in nature, although at times it would also become physical.

> *Usually [the fights] just stayed verbal. It wasn't mean stuff. We don't usually swear at each other, when we fight. It was more just yelling and stuff. I guess we'd comment about, appearance or...I'd say things...*
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> *When we were younger it was more physical than it is now. [That would happen] once every couple weeks maybe, but it wasn't [bad]. It would just be, he'd punch me, I'd punch him back, and that would probably be it. We wouldn't scrap for 20 minutes on the floor or anything. I hurt him a couple times and he's hurt me a couple times. Usually it wasn't intentional. We'd be wrestling or something and then someone would just go a little too far. You'd go, "Whoa, what was that?" and then you'd just punch them back. Or else, he'd take something of mine, so I'd take something of his, and then I'd take something else, and then he'd just punch me and I'd punch him back. It wasn't like [the physical] was the first [thing that happened] if we got into an argument...other things led up to it.*

Jill states that both she and Jack were cautious about how far they would go with their verbal criticisms of one another. However, she stated that the line was still crossed at times.

> *Certain things we knew, you don't even go there. I'd feel bad for things that were happening to Jack, and I think he felt bad when things were happening to me. We were really understanding, I guess, about awkward things and changes and stuff like that. I don't think we ever brought it up 'cause we just knew that you don't go there. We both had acne before, so that would be something that you just don't say. Just don't even go there 'cause you already know how bad that is. I never wanted to see him upset because of what I said, I guess. In anger you say things, but there's some things you just don't go there. There's restrictions on where we fought.*
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> *I think a couple times I said something, and he's said things...and it just doesn't end well. If you went over that [line], then I'd feel bad, if I'd said it. Things about friends and boyfriends and stuff, if you go there, it's just not usually a good thing. I'd say, "Yeah, you have no friends," or whatever, and it would be at a point where he's in transition between friends or whatever, and he didn't...like that, I guess.*

According to Jill, she was the one who initiated much of the negative interactions between her and Jack, whether they were verbal or physical in nature.

> *It didn't seem like Jack started many of the fights. It's usually me starting the fight. All of our lives, it's usually me...'cause he's pretty calm and so I really have to tick him off for something to start. So I usually tick him off... I guess I could say I'm the bad child. He's more calm and he'll deal with things without getting his temper into it and I get...my temper into it, so I think I start things a lot more. It seemed like I was more of the physical [one too]... More than him, [especially] when we were younger. I don't know if that's because he was older and I was younger... [We] both agree...that I started things...[and my parents recognize that too]. They said things before about my temper and how I shouldn't provoke him. In my family, I'm usually the one that starts [it]. If there's a conflict, I'll usually escalate it 'cause I have a quick temper.*

She describes a typical scenario as:

> *...[I would] just go further and further. Like we'd be talking about something or playing or something, and then I'd just go further over the line and further over the line until he got mad. Then I'd wonder, "Why are you mad?" but...I'd take more than I should have [and just keep pushing]. We didn't really talk about the fight much. We'd just [end up] punching each other...*

In most cases, Jill states that her parents would intervene in any conflict she had with Jack. At times, this also included some preventive measures, such as warning Jill about sensitive topics she should not bring up with Jack.

> *...our parents would get involved and solve it for us... They'd just tell us to quit it or punish whoever was being the worst... Or they'd break it up. Send us to our rooms or something. If it was bad we usually got spanked or else we'd get grounded or things taken away. Stuff like that. It wasn't that bad. Just the fact that it was a spanking probably made it worse. They didn't hit us that hard half the time, but it was kind of scary... Usually they stopped all fighting before it got out of hand. They'd intervene before that...*
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> *I knew never to bring up [certain things] 'cause...sometimes my mom...would say, "Yeah, I wouldn't say anything about that. Jack's having problems with that right now," or whatever. So I guess my parents would bring...attention to [the fact] that you don't go there [with certain things].*

However, if ever their parents weren't home, Jack and Jill were left to cope with their fighting on their own. Although Jill states that often arguments would be resolved without any discussion or acknowledgment of what had transpired between them, she claims that there were occasions where they would apologize to one another.

> *[If my parents weren't home] we'd just sort of leave each other alone. Things wouldn't get that out of hand. We would fight and then I'd go my way, he'd go his way. If we're in a big fight, I leave. I'll go into my room and close the door. So I'd usually either just leave or he'd leave, before things got too crazy...and then we'd just sort of...it would just sort of go away. We'd be fighting over something and then something [else] would come along and we'd be best friends again. It usually went away pretty quick. They [just] got resolved so dumb. I'd punch him, he'd punch me, and then two seconds later, [I'd wonder], "What's he doing?" and then I'd go play with him and everything would be fine. Even now when we fight...we'll be so mad at each other and then five seconds later, [one of us will say], "I'm making lunch. Do you want some?" and then everything's fine. So, it just seems like [the fights] resolve themselves.*
>
> *Usually we don't talk about [the fights]. They just sort of go away. There have been things he's said that hurt...[or] I say things [and then] I'll go and apologize or say, "I shouldn't have said that," or "You shouldn't have said that." I've been hurt before, but usually we apologize after... We talk about them after and we kind of laugh about them because they're usually dumb...or else I'll just ignore them...[and] say, "Yeah, they're not that big of a deal," and just let it go.*

When considering possible reasons for the fighting to have occurred, Jill is able to name several factors that may have contributed to the conflict, such as Jack being permitted by their parents to do more than she was allowed to do, personal changes that occurred for her during adolescence, basic personality differences, family dynamics, and Jack's "parental" nature.

> *I think we're pretty much even, but he has a car and he gets to stay out later than me... I don't know if that's 'cause he's older. It might just be 'cause he's a guy. There's lots of things he can do that...like, my parents don't question where he's going half the time and who he's going to be with and stuff...[and that makes me mad]...*
>
> *I seemed to cause a little more trouble around the house when I was [12] than Jack. I think that maybe brought on some fights just 'cause I was having problems in junior high. [Problems] I think that everyone goes through. They don't want their parents to be around and all this stuff, and that probably caused some fights. It didn't seem like Jack had that kind of change. It seemed like he's been...stable, I guess, along the way. He's more "follow the book" and I'm more "see how far you can go". I'm more quick to decide on things without thinking of the consequences. [The rest of my family] is more likely to think everything through. I'm more impulse, which gets me into trouble.*
>
> *[Sometimes] I would start a fight with my parents and [then] Jack gets involved. That's usually how things start. I'll be having a fight with my mom or dad, and then Jack will get into it and then we'll start fighting. When he's having an argument with my mom or dad, I just stay out of it. But he just has to get into everything! I don't know what that's about. That kind of bothers me, just 'cause he doesn't have to be part of everything... [And then the rest of the family] deals with [conflict] differently than I do. I like to...just - leave me alone for five minutes and I'll be fine [whereas] they like to keep talking about it until it's over. I leave...whereas the rest of my family doesn't like to do that [and] I find that really hard...*
>
> *Jack's very protective. So when I do things that he doesn't think are right, he lets me know. I'll do something and Jack won't agree with it and he'll bring it up and I don't agree with that. I'll do something, and he'll say, "I don't know about that," and then we get into this big fight. Sometimes it seems like he's trying to control certain things....like...he doesn't want me to do certain things. I always say, "I already have a mother." He has been very protective. I didn't [always] mind 'cause it was usually good protective stuff and I wasn't doing anything that bad anyways. So I liked it, 'cause it seemed like there was someone there in case I needed him... but...I always thought that [your siblings] are supposed to be on your side on certain things. Like, I'll want to stay out later, and he'll say, "No, no, no. You can't stay out later," and I always thought that he'd support me on it. I [always] thought, "What are you doing?"*

> *and sometimes [that would start fights]. Sometimes I'd go against what he said and that would start a fight, but...it's not that he controls everything. He just that he gives his input on things and...I care what he says and I care what he thinks, so...it seems to put a damper [on what I want to do].*

According to Jill, the definition of abuse would be:

> *...verbal abuse is when you attack someone. Either you attack them or things that they do, or say things towards them that are hurtful. I think of abuse as ongoing. It's not just a one time thing.*

When considering her own interactions with Jack, Jill states that she believes some of them would have been considered to have been abusive. However, despite the negative effects that some of this may have caused Jack, she believes that it was not really "all that bad."

> *...we're low on both [scales of physical and verbal abuse] 'cause we don't usually attack each other...and it's very rare... I don't know 'cause we don't attack each other on certain things but I think there's other things that [do] go into abuse, not just [by] saying, "Yeah, you're dumb and stupid," and stuff to someone, [but by] upsetting someone by what you do. Like how I was talking about how my temper upsets him, well, I guess you could call it abuse. Even though it's not specifically directed at him. I'm not saying, "Yeah, well, you're so..." to his face and stuff. Even though it's not directed at him, I guess you could say [it hurts him]. I think my temper's had an impact on him negatively. He's told me that it has...that it bothers him when I get upset and it makes him feel bad. It just makes him...not happy.*
>
> *[As for the physical stuff], I don't know if I hurt him some of the time. Whether it was even that bad. [I think I] probably [did hurt him], but I didn't think so then. And he's hit me before, but I knew it was coming and I probably deserved it... I didn't feel like it was abuse just 'cause it didn't happen very often and we usually got back at each other...it was equal. I'm not saying abuse has to be [unequal]... I just didn't feel like it was [abuse] 'cause it happened so rare and it wasn't that bad. I don't think abuse has to be that bad to be abuse, but I just don't feel like it was.*

She also states that she believes that conflict between siblings is inevitable.

> *[I think it is inevitable] just because you're around them so much...there's bound to be something that ticks you off. There's different degrees of it, but I think there's some in every relationship. I think it's unacceptable if you're fighting all the time...and maybe knowing that the fights are resolved after and it's not a continuation of the same*

thing every day...

Jill is able to name several aspects of her sibling relationship and family life that she would change if she were given the opportunity. However, she also states that she hopes that if she ever has children, that they have a relationship that is similar to the one she has with Jack.

> *[If I could change anything], maybe [I would make Jack] be more on my side...maybe that he'd interfere a little less than he does. [And I wish my parents had] let us try and handle it on our own sometimes. Half the time they don't even know what we're fighting about. They just hear yelling and so they make assumptions about what's happening in [the] argument and they don't really know because they haven't been there the whole time. [Plus, they usually assume] that I did something bad... [They seem to blame me] 'cause I'm the louder one in the family. So they'd hear me and then go, "Well, Jill must have started something, because [she's being loud]." Or sometimes...we're not even fighting and they think it's a lot worse than it actually is...*
>
> *[If I ever have kids], I'd want it to be the same. It would be nice [if one had less of a temper]...but I think it's been pretty good. I think...we have...a stronger relationship than lots of people I know.*

She is also able to name several things she has learned through her sibling experiences.

> *I've learned how to control my temper better. Just talking to my family and stuff and they let me know, "Well, when you do this, it's..." They told me the way I am and told me what I should change about it. I've looked at Jack as an example for being more calm and not blowing things out of proportion. He's always the one that's - well not always - but most of the time he's the one that's calm.*

Although Jill states that there is still some conflict in the present, she and Jack have maintained a friendship over the years that seems to be growing stronger as they get older.

> *Now that we're older, there's usually no physical [fighting] at all. It's mostly just verbal. If things get really out of hand, then they might turn physical a bit...*
>
> *We've always been close...and we've always pretty much hung out [together]. [We're] just hanging out more [now]. It seems like we're closer now than when we were really young, just 'cause we have more to talk about and I like hanging out with him and*

> *stuff. [If you were to talk to him], I think he'd say that we have a good relationship and that we hang out a lot and that we don't fight...a lot...*

Jill expresses some strong positive feelings toward Jack, which seems to indicate a great deal of hope for the future of their relationship.

> *It's a good relationship. We're such good friends...I can trust him. He's always there if I need him...he's always been there if ever needed him [for] anything.*

The Meta-Story

Thematic Analysis and Presentation of Exemplars

As the main purpose in including a sibling dyad in this study was to allow the reader to hear the perspective of both the victim and instigator of a particular sibling pair, it is important to take the analysis a step further in order to provide similarities and differences in the experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of the two participants. Although some of this was already established through the presentation of the narratives, in this section the viewpoints of Jack and Jill will be made more concrete and explicit by providing salient themes which were shared, as well as those which were either contradictory or missing from one of the stories. As in the previous chapter, exemplars, or particular examples or incidents, will be included in order to provide descriptive illustrations of each theme. By comparing the two stories in this way, I hope to provide a more comprehensive view of the sibling relationship between Jack and Jill, which could act as a "meta-story" and be used to gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which they have interpreted and come to an understanding of their experiences with one another.

Siblings engaged in conflict that they consider to have been abusive. Both Jack and Jill seem to agree that some of the altercations that occurred between them could be called "abuse," especially the more verbal aspects of their fighting. In fact, both state directly that any physical altercations that occurred were not particularly damaging or serious. However, they both admit that they "crossed the line" verbally at times, which may have caused some damage and negative effects.

Jack: *I think abuse for us was more [verbal]. The verbal stuff was really awful in some instances, what we said to each other. There was times when I'd hit my sister in the arm or...where I'd get hit...but it was never physical to the extent where we had to be broken up because I was going to hurt her or she was going to hurt me... She gave me a couple fat lips, but that was just by mistake. We probably crossed the line of abuse where we were hurtful to each other more [verbally]. We knew how hurtful it was, because we were bawling after.*

...deep in the back...in the back of our thoughts, for some reason, if there's a girl or guy we're kind of interested in and they're not showing interest back, [I think], "Maybe Jill was right"...after a rough day, you start to believe what was said back then.

Jill: *...we're low on both [scales of physical and verbal abuse] 'cause we don't usually attack each other...and it's very rare... I think there's other things that [do] go into abuse, not just [by] saying, "Yeah, you're dumb and stupid," and stuff to someone, [but by] upsetting someone by what you do. Like how...my temper upsets him, well, I guess you could call it abuse. Even though it's not directed at him, I guess you could say [it hurts him]. I think my temper's had an impact on him negatively... [As for the physical stuff], I don't know if I hurt him some of the time... I didn't feel like it was abuse just 'cause it didn't happen very often and we usually got back at each other...it was equal. I'm not saying abuse has to be [unequal]...I just didn't feel like it was [abuse] because it happened so rare and it wasn't that bad.*

In a similar fashion to the instigators in the previous chapter, it appears that Jack and Jill, while owning some responsibility for the severity of their interactions, also seem to be minimizing some of its importance and impact. This seems to be the case especially with Jill, who begrudgingly calls her temper "abuse" while minimizing the damage that may have been caused by any verbal insults or physical altercations. It seems that the role of equality, or mutuality, seems to be playing a role in her definition of abuse, which is interesting in light of findings from the previous chapter which indicated that the definition of sibling abuse may need to be expanded to include mutuality. As described previously, it is likely that many siblings engage in the maltreatment of one another, and the damage that may be caused by such behaviour should not be tolerated or accepted simply due to the fact that they are each abusing the other (Dunn 1996; Klagsbrun, 1992). It is important that this aspect of sibling maltreatment be explored further, as it would be interesting to explore the impact and differences between sibling maltreatment that is unidirectional and mutual.

Although Jack also seems to be minimizing some of the impact of the physical altercations that took place between him and Jill, he seems to take a great deal of responsibility for the hurt that was caused through the verbal abuse that occurred. As it seems that Jill was the instigator of much of the conflict they experienced, it is interesting to note that Jack is willing to take responsibility for any damage he may have caused, while Jill does not. Although this may be due to Jill being very young, and perhaps not as insightful or reflective about her sibling relationship as Jack seems to be, it is also interesting that this finding seems to parallel some of the findings from my previous study of the victims (Hanoski, 1998), who seemed to show much more remorse and reflection about their experiences with their siblings than the instigators have displayed in this study.

When considering the implications of this finding for counselling practice, it is important to recognize that the victim and instigator are likely to have different perceptions of their experiences (Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994), which the counsellor needs to consider and validate for each sibling, particularly when working within a family therapy context. However, it is also important that the counsellor work toward the acceptance of responsibility, as it likely that any hurt, resentment, or damaging effects will not be healed unless the instigating sibling(s) is able to acknowledge and take responsibility for his/her actions (Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994). It is also imperative that the counsellor be aware of the difference between appropriate levels of sibling conflict or rivalry and more damaging forms of maltreatment and abuse, so that any maladaptive behaviour can be recognized, interrupted, and replaced with more healthy coping mechanisms and conflict resolution strategies.

Conflict occurred over trivial matters. As with the instigators in the previous chapter, Jack and Jill both acknowledge that much of their fighting began over trivial matters, such as chores or one having more privileges than the other.

Jack: *We were in each other's hair quite a bit. Lots of, "I want to watch TV and you're watching TV." Little things that would escalate into big arguments. I was starting to get to do some things, like learner's permits, ski trips with the school, and she was getting left behind a bit.*

Jill: *We always fought about dumb things...like, who got what or sharing and stuff. It's usually who has to wash the floor or who has to vacuum. "I don't want to do it." "Well, I don't want to do it," and then we'd just get in a fight. It was pretty much all dumb stuff that we fought about...small, little [things]. Chores and taking each other's stuff... I think we're pretty much even, but he has a car and he gets to stay out later than me... There's lots of things he can do...my parents don't question where he's going half the time and who he's going to be with and stuff...[and that makes me mad]...*

As stated in the previous chapter, while these issues appear to be somewhat petty and unimportant on the surface, they reflect many deeper issues related to competition, individuality, and entitlement (Bryant, 1982; Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Klagsbrun, 1992; McGuire et al., 2000; Sandmaier, 1994). Although such arguments may actually be beneficial in allowing each child the opportunity to assert their independence, state their grievances, set their boundaries, and increase their sense of individuality (Bennet, 1990; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Cicirelli, 1995; Dunn, 1984; Freeman, 1993; Herzberger, 1996; Herzberger & Hall, 1993; McGuire et al., 2000; Vandell and Bailey, 1992), developmental difficulties and sibling maltreatment can occur if these disputes are allowed to cross the line into abuse. Thus, it is extremely important that parents treat their children in an egalitarian manner and that they monitor their children's behaviour to ensure that their conflicts are not escalating into maltreatment.

It is also important to note that some siblings may use the fact that fights occurred over "small things" to minimize the impact of their dysfunctional interactions. For example, Jill seems quite attached to the belief that the conflict that occurred between her and Jack was not serious, simply because the issues were not of any importance. This seems to be quite paradoxical, as one would think it quite disturbing that they are reacting so negatively over trivial matters, rather than to those that they considered to be serious. Counsellors need to be aware of this tendency in order to keep their clients in check and ensure that they do not minimize any damaging behaviours in which they have engaged. Counsellors will also need to monitor themselves to ascertain whether or not they are acting with some sort of bias and treating maladaptive behaviour as acceptable simply because these situations are arising over minor issues.

One sibling treated the other in a "parental" manner. Jack and Jill both recognize that Jack had a tendency to act somewhat like a "parent" toward Jill, which they both see as contributing negatively to the quality of their relationship. Although Jill is able to see that Jack's parental nature came out of a place of caring, she also claims that it was extremely frustrating to her, as he always seemed to be prying into her business. Now that Jack is older, he states that he is able to see his sister's perception of his actions and recognizes that his behaviour was difficult for her, even though in his mind, much of his "prying" was a genuine attempt to help her.

Jack: *I think me and my mom and dad want[ed] to help...and maybe that may have caused a little [friction]. She maybe thought that we were trying to do it for her. I just remember really pushing...she'd probably say [that I should have] mind[ed] my own business. [That] I put too much pressure on her. In her eyes, it was not to help her. It was to be nosy and just to...upset her even more.*

Jill: *Jack's very protective. So when I do things that he doesn't think are right, he lets me know... Sometimes it's like he's trying to control certain things. I always say, "I already have a mother." I didn't [always] mind...'cause it seemed like there was someone there in case I needed him, but...he just has to get into everything! I don't know what that's about. That kind of bothers me, just 'cause he doesn't have to be part of everything...*

This is similar to one of the themes that emerged from the instigators' stories in the last chapter, although it seems to have had a different effect on the relationship between Jack and Jill than it had for the other participants. For the instigators in the previous chapter, it seemed that the role of "parent" contributed to sibling maltreatment by the more parental child taking a position where he/she felt entitled to "punish" the other child, by the development of feelings of resentment and anger over having to be more responsible than the other children, or the parental role contributing to a power differential between the children (Bryant, 1992; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Ross & Milgram, 1982; Sandmaier, 1994). Conversely, Jill seemed to engage in maltreatment of Jack due to her resentment over his taking on the parental role; in other words, she became the instigator as a reaction to being treated like a child, rather than Jack becoming an instigator from feeling like a parent. Several other researchers have commented on the negative impact parental behaviour can have on siblings, as they often come to feel as though they are being controlled and infringed upon, as well as feeling that they are being treated in a condescending manner (Bryant, 1982; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992). According to Jill, not only did she react in anger to Jack's "nosiness," but she also seemed to feel somewhat betrayed by Jack, as he tended to oppose some of the activities she wanted to engage in, rather than support her.

> *Jill:* *I always thought that [your siblings] are supposed to be on your side on certain things. Like, I'll want to stay out later, and he'll say, "No, no, no. You can't stay out later," and I always thought that he'd support me on it. I [always] thought, "What are you doing?" and sometimes [that would start fights].*

This is an important finding, as it lends understanding to one of the factors that can lead to the development of a dysfunctional sibling relationship. It also adds to the finding from the last chapter, which is valuable, as it appears that maltreatment can occur both from a parental child feeling overburdened by this role, as well as the parented child feeling as though he/she is incompetent and incapable of doing things for him/herself. Thus, in planning intervention strategies, it would be important to take into account the perspective of both sides of a parental type of sibling relationship, recognizing that the development of maltreatment can occur from either side. Parents need to keep this in mind in dealing with their children, so that they not only ensure that one child does not take on too much responsibility (Wiehe, 1998), but also make sure that the other children do not feel babied or intruded upon in their quest for individuality and independence .

Belief that high levels of conflict between siblings is inevitable. In a similar way to the instigators in the last chapter, Jack and Jill both state that conflict between siblings is unavoidable. In fact, Jack is able to name several positive aspects of the negative interactions he had with Jill, stating that he feels conflict is almost necessary in order to learn appropriate conflict resolution strategies in extra-familial relationships.

Jack: *If I could go back it would probably still be the same way. Not to the point of pushing, but still, [siblings] get on each other's nerves and it's that time where you're growing up... I think a lot of kids in...those teen years, they really experience a lot of [conflict]. As a kid, you say some hurtful stuff to your sibling... I'd hate to have grown up in a perfect household where there is no fights because eventually people have to...deal with that and if you don't know how...then you tend to be more hurtful. I think you need to be taught how to combat. I think probably me and my sister are better at that because of what we've gone through.*

Jill: *[I think it is inevitable] just because you're around them so much...there's bound to be something that ticks you off. There's different degrees of it, but I think there's some in every relationship.*

As stated in the previous chapter, this finding is related to the prevailing societal and familial belief that conflict between siblings is to be expected, without any limits placed on what would be considered to be acceptable (Gelles, 1997; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996). Thus, despite the acknowledgment of some negative ramifications and regrets over the altercations they experienced with one another, both Jack and Jill seem to have internalized the belief that such behaviour is "normal" and acceptable when it is displayed with one's sibling. Although there is some merit to Jack's belief that some of the conflict was beneficial, in that it helped him to acquire conflict resolution strategies, it is also notable that he seemed to learn this by finding out "what not to do" from his interactions with his sister. It seems that it would be more advantageous for children to learn how to resolve conflict in a more direct manner from their parents, rather than learning it indirectly from the negative experiences they have had with their siblings.

This finding is similar to many of the previous ones, in that the role for counsellors rests mainly in the raising of awareness for both society and parents, so that damaging behaviours are not simply dismissed as being a natural part of the sibling relationship. This would include education and the development of awareness of ways of handling conflict that can be detrimental and damaging, so that these behaviours can be interrupted and altered to more adaptive ways of coping. Furthermore, as minimization and denial of the severity of sibling maltreatment seem to be prevalent, it would be imperative that counsellors do not allow parents or siblings to diminish the importance of such behaviour by deeming it "inevitable" or "normal." In addition, counsellors will need to monitor their own biases in this area, so that their beliefs do not influence their work with siblings in a way that invalidates the importance and damaging effects of sibling maltreatment (Wiehe, 1998).

Parents intervened in disputes between the children. Jack and Jill concur that their parents were very active in interrupting their fighting whenever it started to get "out of hand." Although Jill seemed to recognize that parental intervention could be helpful in preventing sibling maltreatment, she also expressed some frustration that she and Jack were not left to deal with some of their altercations on their own.

Jack: *[My parents] always [intervened]. Mom and dad would referee a bit. I remember [we'd] get into it and I'd hit her on the arm and she'd hit me on the arm [and] she'd be yelling to let them know something was happening, and then they could kind of tell from our tones of voices and [if] our words started to get a little meaner, as the fight went on...they could intervene. My mom would say, "What's the matter with you?" That kind of thing...and separate us, so that the physical wouldn't occur anymore.*

Jill: *...our parents would get involved and solve it for us... They'd just tell us to quit it or punish whoever was being the worst...Or they'd break it up. Send us to*

> *our rooms or something. If it was bad we usually got spanked or else we'd get grounded or things taken away. Usually they stopped all fighting before it got out of hand... I knew never to bring up [certain things] 'cause...sometimes my mom...would say, "Yeah, I wouldn't say anything about that. Jack's having problems with that right now," or whatever. So I guess my parents would bring...attention to [the fact] that you don't go there [with certain things].*
>
> *[...I wish my parents had] let us try and handle it on our own sometimes. Half the time they don't even know what we're fighting about. They just hear yelling and so they make assumptions about what's happening in [the] argument and they don't really know because they haven't been there the whole time... Or sometimes...we're not even fighting and they think it's a lot worse than it actually is...*

This is one finding which seems to be a very positive one, as it appears that Jack and Jill's parents were taking the fighting seriously and making attempts to intervene before anybody got hurt. However, it seems as though they had a tendency to focus on the more visible forms of sibling maltreatment, such as physical fighting; while this seems to be a common parental reaction (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Wiehe, 1997b), it is likely that the less visible, verbal forms of maltreatment may still have been occurring, which can result in a great deal of negative effects for the siblings involved (Wiehe, 1997b). In addition, it appears that at times Jack and Jill's parents would intervene in ways which were maladaptive, such as by using corporal punishment, which reinforces the use of violence to cope with negative feelings, or simply telling them to stop, which does not provide any information with regard to appropriate ways to resolve conflicts (Wiehe, 1997b).

This is an area which requires a great deal of parent education and awareness, not only into the appropriate point at which to intervene on a sibling dispute, but also into ways in which to intervene that can help the children learn positive conflict resolution strategies and appropriate ways in which to express negative feelings (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Kashani et al., 1992; Siddiqui & Ross, 1999; Snyder & Schrepferman, 1997; Wiehe, 1998). Such forms of parent education could happen in pre-natal or parenting classes, through publications and books related to parenting, or in counselling (Widom, 1998; Wiehe, 1998). Jill's point that her parents tended to intervene too quickly also has merit, as several authors have written that children who are left on their own to resolve appropriate levels of conflict often learn how to resolve extra-familial conflicts as well (Bank & Kahn, 1982; Dunn, 1984; Stormshak et al., 1996; Straus et al., 1980). However, it is important for parents to be able to recognize the difference between adaptive and maladaptive levels of conflict or healthy and unhealthy forms of conflict resolution and intervene at the point where sibling disputes become abusive (Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Wiehe, 1998).

Ineffective methods of coping. At times, Jack and Jill were forced to deal with their conflicts on their own, as their parents were not home or were otherwise unavailable to intervene. When this occurred, they would often use unhealthy methods of coping, such as ignoring the fact that the fight had even occurred. Although both acknowledge that there were times when they would apologize for particularly hurtful interactions, it seems that this was the exception and that their usual mode of functioning was to move on without discussing their feelings or resolving the argument.

Jack: *...there were times when [my parents] weren't there when we would argue... We'd [each go] in our own area...each to our corners...doors would slam...and she'd lock her door so I couldn't get in and I'd lock mine so she couldn't get in my room, and that'd be the end of the argument. There were some times where we'd separate to our corners, by ourselves, and then come back and [say], "I'm sorry," and realize that we made a mistake.*

Jill: *[If my parents weren't home] we'd just sort of leave each other alone. Things wouldn't get that out of hand. We would fight and then I'd go my way, he'd go his way. If we're in a big fight, I leave. I'll go into my room and close the door. So I'd usually either just leave or he'd leave, before things got too crazy...and then we'd just sort of... it would just sort of go away. We'd be fighting over something and then something [else] would come along and we'd be best friends again. It usually went away pretty quick... They [just] got resolved so dumb. I'd punch him, he'd punch me, and then two seconds later, [I'd wonder], "What's he doing?" and then I'd go play with him and everything would be fine... it just seems like [the fights] resolve themselves.*

> *Usually we don't talk about [the fights]. They just sort of go away. There have been things he's said that hurt...[or] I say things [and then] I'll go and apologize or say, "I shouldn't have said that," or "You shouldn't have said that." I've been hurt before, but usually we apologize after. We talk about them after and we kind of laugh about them because they're usually dumb...or else I'll just ignore them...[and] say, "Yeah, they're not that big of a deal," and just let it go.*

This theme was also found for the instigators in the last chapter and was linked to a reliance on maladaptive ways of handling conflict due to never having learned appropriate coping strategies or conflict resolution. These maladaptive ways of handling conflict may then be reinforced through operant conditioning, where the child is rewarded by the release of emotion or the realization of desired consequences, such as being left alone by one's sibling (Herzberger, 1996; Snyder & Schrepferman, 1997). Once again, the onus seems to be falling on the parents to ensure that they have taught their children appropriate ways of handling negative emotions and disagreements with others so that they do not begin to display harmful behaviours that may be strengthened through reinforcement and then repeated in future sibling interactions. Counsellors also need to be aware of the role of operant conditioning, so that reinforced patterns of behaviour can be recognized, interrupted, and replaced with more adaptive ways of handling conflict. In addition, operant conditioning can be used in the reverse, with parents actively rewarding more positive behaviours and coping strategies, so that these behaviours are repeated in the future.

It is somewhat reassuring that Jack and Jill would apologize to each other for some of their hurtful behaviours. In contrast to the instigators in the last chapter, it seems that Jack and Jill had a certain amount of empathy for one another, which seems to have helped them in controlling the level of negativity they used with one another.

Jack: *I can remember saying stuff...you'd say something to her and...you'd go to your room crying after type of thing because when you think about it later after you've cooled down, and to actually say something like that... We knew how hurtful it was, because we were bawling after. We understood how bad we had made the other person feel...'cause all that stuff she's going through,* *I'm going through too and I know what kind of pain that is.*

Jill: *Certain things we knew, you don't even go there. I'd feel bad for things that were happening to Jack, and I think he felt bad when things were happening to me. We were really understanding, I guess, about awkward things and changes and stuff like that. I don't think we ever brought it up 'cause we just knew that you don't go there.*

This finding is important, as it lends some understanding to how parents and counsellors can work with children in order to help them curb their negative behaviours toward one another. By building on each child's level of empathy and concern for his/her sibling, they can be helped to see the damaging effect his/her comments or actions may be having, and may be motivated to stop engaging in such behaviour (Siddiqui & Ross, 1999; Wiehe, 1997a). A child's level of empathy can be strengthened in counselling with a variety of techniques that emphasize learning how to understand the feelings and perspectives of others, such as by taking part in role play activities or engaging in symbolic forms of play (Dunn, 1996; Klagsbrun, 1992; Wiehe, 1997a).

Learning from negative interactions. Both Jack and Jill were able to name several things that they learned through the maladaptive experiences they had with one another, such as appropriate conflict resolution, control of one's temper, and acceptance of each other's differences. In fact, Jack considered the maltreatment he experienced with his sister to have been instrumental in learning how to handle conflict in extra-familial relationships, and he stated that he would not change their interactions at all because he learned so much from them.

Jack: *...it was a real learning kind of thing, because I realized that [I'm] not the top dog...that Jill...she's got to learn to do some things for herself too and I was...trying to help her out all the time. You've got to let them find their own way sometimes.*

Because of my interactions in my family, I feel confident in interacting with people. Not only towards her, but to other people I meet. I don't feel shy. I can stick up for myself. If something's happened or if I feel that something's not *right, I will let someone know in a way that won't sound hurtful. And if [someone] wants to argue with me about something, you kind of have to...just step back and think what they're going through too as you deal with that problem. There's no point in screaming at them... I think that may have been because of learning that at home and [then] carry[ing] that outside of the house... I think you need to learn how to combat. I think probably me and my sister are better at that because of what we've gone through.*

I know my sister now. Before you get in an argument, she needs time to cool off. Where sometimes I'll want it resolved right away. [But] I know that she needs to cool off for a while... [And] I understand that...each individual's an individual and we're all working toward different things...we're maturing individually and as a family...getting to know each other.

Jill: *I've learned how to control my temper better. I've looked at Jack as an example for being more calm and not blowing things out of proportion.*

As described in previous chapters, one of the benefits of sibling conflict, as opposed to maltreatment or abuse, is that siblings learn how to handle disputes in an appropriate manner, which helps them in other interpersonal relationships (Bank & Kahn, 1982; Dunn, 1984; Stormshak et al., 1996; Straus et al., 1980). However, for Jack and Jill, as with the instigators in the last chapter, it seems as though they learned how to handle conflict through trial-and-error with one another. Thus, even though their negative interactions with one another were helpful in learning conflict resolution skills, it is unfortunate that they had to hurt one another in the process of coming to a greater understanding of how to handle disputes in an adaptive manner. It appears that earlier parental intervention and more direct instruction would be helpful in allowing siblings to learn these skills at a younger age and without "experimenting" on one another.

It also remains to be seen whether Jack and Jill have actually learned how to put healthy conflict resolution strategies into practice. While Jill comments on the fact that Jack has helped her to be more calm, she also alludes to the fact that conflicts are still occurring at the present time. They are both also very young and have not really had an opportunity to use appropriate conflict resolution tactics in other interpersonal relationships. As research findings indicate that violence in childhood is often perpetuated within an aggressive child's adult relationships (Dunn, 1984; Finkelhor & Dzuiba-Leatherman, 1994; Fried, 1997; Gully et al., 1981; Loeber et al., 1983; Perry et al., 1992; Steinmetz, 1978), it would be interesting to conduct research on older participants in order to examine whether this finding holds true, with aggressive siblings continuing to use violence to handle disputes in adulthood, such as with their spouses or children.

Positive aspects to the sibling relationship. Jack and Jill both state that there are several positives to the relationship they share with one another, and that they are good friends. While Jack states that this friendship has moved in cycles, with a period of animosity in adolescence breaking up the phases of friendship, he claims that they are quite close in the present. Jill maintains that she and Jack have been friends consistently over the years. Both comment on the depth to which they value one another.

Jack: *...when we were really young we got along. Like, when she was five, kind of those younger years, we always played together and there wasn't...too much conflict... We were pals and [then] those hormones brought us to a breaking point... In junior high it was kind of tough... She's one of my good friends now. We do things together. We spend time with each other outside of the family, going to movies or out to a bar for a couple drinks with our friends. We've [both] always been involved in athletics. So we always shared that kind of stuff... I feel really lucky to have had...my sister as a good friend of mine. I cherish that. I'm proud of her. I'm glad I have Jill and the way she is. I'd do anything for my sister. If she needed a kidney or something, I'd give it to her right away without thinking twice.*

Jill: *We've always gotten along pretty well. I'd play with him and his friends and we'd play together... I don't think I appreciated Jack as much until I got a little older. He was just sort of there...someone to play with... We've always been close...and we've always pretty much hung out [together]. It seems like we're closer now than when we were really young, just 'cause we have more to talk about and I like hanging out with him and stuff. It's a good relationship. We're such good friends...I can trust him. He's always there if I need him...he's always been there if I ever needed him [for] anything.*

Jack and Jill seem to contradict each other somewhat, as Jack claims that there was a "stage where they really didn't spend any time together," while Jill seems to believe that they have always been able to maintain a friendship, despite their fighting. It appears that she may be minimizing the severity and negative effects of the maltreatment, as she does not acknowledge any time periods where she and Jack were not getting along. While it is impossible to know which perception is more accurate, it is interesting to note the differences in the recollections of Jack and Jill, as well as to link the quality and details of their stories with the interpretations of other victims and instigators. The differences in perception between Jack and Jill seem to fit in with a general pattern that seems to be emerging, where the instigators tend to be less aware or less willing to admit the negative effects of sibling maltreatment than the victims or to deny the existence of any competition or negativity between them (Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992). This has also been found to be the case in other studies, where siblings tended to report dissimilar views on the negative aspects of their sibling relationships, but similar perceptions for the positive aspects (Stocker et al., 1997).

This theme is also important as it identifies "cycles" in the sibling relationship, where the negativity escalates in adolescence and then evens out again as the children begin to grow into adulthood. This would be essential knowledge for parents, as it pinpoints a time period during which sibling maltreatment may be more likely to occur, allowing parents the opportunity to teach children appropriate conflict resolution before that time. Parents can also be made aware of the fact that the teenage years may be a more volatile period, so that they take any necessary precautions and become more vigilant in their monitoring of their children's behaviour.

This finding seems to contradict previous research, which indicates that sibling violence tends to decrease as children get older (Cicirelli, 1995; Dunn & Munn, 1986; Fruman & Buhrmester, 1985; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Goodwin & Roscoe, 1990;

Herzberger & Hall, 1993; Prochaska & Prochaska, 1985). However, researchers have also stated that in adolescence, sibling maltreatment still occurs at a high level and that adolescents have a physical strength that can lead to significant damage if siblings do become violent with one another (Goodwin and Roscoe, 1990; Straus et al., 1980; Vandell & Bailey, 1992). In addition, Abramovitch and colleagues (1982) and Faber and Mazlish (1987) write that physical altercations may simply be replaced by verbal ones as children become more fluent with language, leading to more verbally abusive behaviours. This seems to be supported somewhat in this study, with maltreatment between Jack and Jill becoming more verbal and less physical as they got older.

Finally, as described in the last chapter, this finding would be important in counselling, as the thread of friendship described by both Jack and Jill could be used to provide them with exceptions to the dominant story of sibling maltreatment. These exceptions can then be used as a foundation on which to build a more positive relationship, by highlighting the connection and positive life events that they have shared (Cicirelli, 1994; White & Epston, 1990). Positive events that are occurring in the present can be used as evidence that the sibling relationship is changing, and the counsellor can encourage clients to take further steps in creating shared positive moments and in attempting to develop a closer bond.

Difficulties continue in the present. Despite the fact that Jack and Jill both state that they have a close, positive friendship, they both also acknowledge that they continue to experience conflict with one another in the present. However, it seems that they have reached a point where they are capable of resolving these conflicts in a healthy manner, rather than resorting to maltreatment or abuse of one another.

Jack: *As far as conflict now, I mean there's little things. Everybody gets stressed but there's no really big, extreme interactions. We still have our conflicts. There's times when I get on my sister's nerves and she gets on mine, but we know how to deal with it in a better way.*

Jill: *Now that we're older, there's usually no physical [fighting] at all. It's mostly just verbal. If things get really out of hand, then they might turn physical a* *bit...*

It is important to keep in mind that with this sibling dyad, the participants are still quite young. Thus, it is possible that as Jack and Jill grow older, and become more mature and independent, their fighting may become less frequent or stop altogether. Jack and Jill themselves seem to be quite optimistic about the future of their relationship, which is quite different from the instigators in the last chapter, many of whom were beginning to feel somewhat hopeless about ever being able to bridge the distance with their siblings. In cases of sibling maltreatment that are similar to Jack and Jill, it would be most helpful for the counsellor to help them continue to resolve conflicts in a healthy manner and look for the positives in their relationship. In fact, it appears that Jack and Jill are managing to overcome their difficulties quite well on their own and would not be likely to seek counselling. It would be important, though, for parents and siblings to recognize that healing a disruptive relationship is a process that takes time, as family members learn alternate ways of behaving and relating to one another (Sandmaier, 1994). Thus, they should be encouraged to be patient with themselves as they begin the process of rebuilding and creating a close, adult sibling relationship.

Confusion regarding who was the instigator. One of the themes that emerged as being contradictory between Jack and Jill was the issue of which of them was the instigator of their negative interactions. While Jill states quite clearly that she believes she was the instigator, claiming that all of her family members see her this way, Jack seems to be reluctant to place all of the blame on his sister. Thus, although he does acknowledge that Jill had a "temper," he claims that he also instigated some of their fighting.

Jill: *It didn't seem like Jack started many of the fights. It's usually me starting the fight. All of our lives, it's usually me...'cause he's pretty calm and so I really have to tick him off for something to start. So I usually tick him off... I guess I could say I'm the bad child. He's more calm and he'll deal with things without getting his temper into it and I get...my temper into it, so I think I start things* *a lot more. It seemed like I was more of the physical [one too]... [We] both agree...that I started things...[and my parents recognize that too]. They said things before about my temper and how I shouldn't provoke him.*

Jack: *Jill would start it probably because I was either being lazy [or] lethargic. If she was in a bad mood, she'd let me know it. She'd let everybody know [it]...sort of like: get off the train tracks when the train's coming to you. So we each had our tendencies where I would be really lethargic and she would get upset and let her anger out on everybody else... I couldn't really pinpoint that it was either I that always started the fights or [that] she would always start the fights. I'd have my days where I'd be bugging her constantly. Or she wouldn't get away from me either. I'm trying to think of some examples where I'd pick a fight...but...I don't know. I guess I did initiate the [physical aspects]. The push or the hit against the arm. That kind of thing. And then after that, she'd do that too, but it was probably me that initiated that [part of it]...*

Through the analysis of Jack and Jill's stories, it seems that the true instigator was Jill, as they both acknowledge that she had a temper and tended to take her anger out on the other family members. It is interesting that Jack is so reluctant to place the blame on his sister; this is likely a reflection of his desire to "protect" his sister and be fair with the placement of blame, as he did tend to reciprocate with much of his sister's negativity. However, there are other aspects of this sibling dyad's narratives that fit in with the belief that Jill played the role of instigator and Jack the role of victim: Jill's minimization of any damage that occurred from the maltreatment, which is similar to the instigators in the previous chapter; Jack's detailed memory and analysis of his sibling relationship, which is consistent with the process of many other victims of sibling violence (Hanoski, 1998; Wiehe, 1997b); and Jill's lack of memory and inconsistencies throughout her story, which, again, are similar to the other instigators involved in this study. Thus, Jack and Jill seem to fit with the stories of other victims and instigators that have been studied, leading to the conclusion that although some of the maltreatment may have been mutual, Jack was primarily the victim while Jill played the role of instigator.

In working with this issue in therapy, it is important for instigators to be able to recognize their mistakes and to feel remorse for their actions in order for them to find resolution and forgiveness from their siblings (Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994). This would include recognizing any damage that occurred from the maltreatment, as well as the fact that he/she is responsible for the initiation of maladaptive ways of handling conflict. In the case of Jack and Jill, Jill seems to be somewhere in the middle of this process, as she is willing to acknowledge being the instigator, but is actively minimizing the damage or importance of the altercations she had with Jack. While it appears that Jack may not need her to come to these realizations, as he seems to have reached a certain level of resolution and forgiveness on his own, it is likely that other siblings in this situation would need some sort of recognition and acknowledgment from their brothers and sisters in order to move past the maltreatment and build a closer relationship. Thus, counsellors and parents can help siblings to recognize and accept responsibility for their actions, enabling the sibling pair to move past the maltreatment and forge a healthier relationship with one another. In cases where the instigator is not willing or able to take responsibility for his/her actions, it would be important for the counsellor to work with victimized siblings to forgive and move on, as well as to grieve if the possibility of a close sibling relationship does not seem possible (Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994).

Regrets and changes. Jack and Jill both name several regrets and/or changes that they would make to their past sibling interactions if they were given an opportunity.

Jack: *...I didn't enjoy that last little bit because I was such a jerk... If I could go back...I wouldn't be like that. I wish I wasn't so pushy. I realize [now] how hard that was...and me wanting to help [her] doesn't [really] help... If I could go back again...I wouldn't be smothering her, trying to help the way I wanted to...[and] always give my psychological opinion on everything.*

Jill: *[If I could change anything], maybe [I would make Jack] be more on my side...maybe that he'd interfere a little less than he does. [And I wish my parents] had let us try and handle it on our own sometimes.*

It is interesting that with this theme, Jack focused on himself and named regrets that he has about the ways that he used to conduct himself within his sibling relationship. In contrast, Jill also focused on Jack, rather than on herself, naming ways that she wished he had been different. Once again, this finding speaks to the tendency of the instigator to evade responsibility for his/her actions. Thus, as previously stated, the role of the counsellor would be to encourage the instigating sibling to acknowledge the presence of sibling maltreatment and take responsibility for his/her role and for any damage that was caused, as well as to help the victimized sibling move past the abuse if it does not seem possible that amends can be made with his/her sibling (Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994).

Despite having regrets and stating that they would make changes to their sibling relationship, both Jack and Jill state that if they were to have children one day, they would want them to have the same sort of sibling experience that they have had with one another.

Jill: *[If I ever have kids], I'd want it to be the same. It would be nice [if one had less of a temper], but I think it's been pretty good.*

Jack: *I hope to have kids and when I do, I think they're going to go through those kinds of problems too, but I hope that there can be a time where they're close and good friends. [But] you want your kids to...make mistakes to learn from them and understand different things. If they're having arguments with their brothers or their sisters...in the future with friends they can learn how to deal with that.*

Here Jill seems to be taking some responsibility for her role, by acknowledging that she had a temper that she would not want to see in her children's relationship to one another. This may represent some movement toward acceptance of her role as instigator, and could be used in therapy to take further steps toward recognition of the seriousness of the negativity that occurred between her and Jack. This could be done by exploring her temper further and questioning Jack and other family members on how her temper had a negative impact on them. Jill could also explore for herself how her temper has created problems in her life and ways that she has seen that it has hurt others. Aside from this acknowledgment of having a temper, Jill seems to be continuing with her pattern of minimizing the maltreatment, by completely overlooking it and stating that it was a good relationship. This has been discussed above, in that she would likely need to take a more realistic view of her interactions with Jack and take responsibility for her role in order for them to completely heal their relationship.

With regard to Jack, it seems that he has taken his experiences with his sister, as negative and hurtful as they may have been to him, and found a way to use them as a worthwhile and valuable learning experience. While it is possible that some of his interactions with Jill fell into the realm of conflict and served as a positive learning experience, it also seems to be quite common for victims of abuse to help themselves heal from their experiences by taking away some sort of learning (Hanoski, 1998). Thus, this finding seems to show that Jack has found a positive way to integrate past hurtful experiences, which serves as evidence that he is healing from any damage that his sibling relationship may have caused. It seems that this occurs with other victimized siblings as well, who seem to be thankful for the learning and strength they have gained from their experiences, claiming that they are a part of what has made them who they are (Hanoski, 1998; Wiehe, 1997b).

Summary of themes. Taken together, the above themes create an overall picture, or meta-story, of a sibling relationship that was quite strong and positive, but also had a side which was quite conflicted and characterized by maltreatment. While both siblings acknowledge that negative interactions occurred on a frequent basis, there is some incongruity between the stories of Jack and Jill, with Jill claiming that their altercations were not very serious or damaging. Despite this, both acknowledge that their interactions were characterized by some behaviours that would be considered to be abusive. They both also agree that disputes occurred over trivial matters, and that a major issue between them was the "parenting" nature of Jack, which Jill took as intrusive and prying. There was also a common belief between Jack and Jill that the types of negative interactions they were engaging in were inevitable within the context of a sibling relationship, and that they learned a great deal from these altercations. In addition, they both acknowledge the central role of their parents as "referees," stating that they often did not have adequate coping skills when they were left on their own to handle their disputes and would often overlook their arguments without discussing them or apologizing for any hurtful behaviour. They both also claim to have a good friendship in the present, although they still experience some friction on occasion.

Additional themes emerged where Jack and Jill did not agree with one another. For example, while Jill clearly named herself as being the instigator of sibling maltreatment, Jack seemed to be more confused on this issue, taking some of the blame on himself. However, he did acknowledge that Jill had a temper, which was largely the reason for many of their negative interactions. In addition, Jack expressed regrets over ways that he behaved with his sister, while Jill seemed to place the blame on Jack and did not mention any ways in which she wished she had behaved differently.

Taken together, these themes indicate that while having some differences, many of the perceptions and interpretations of the siblings seem to correspond to one another. Where they do not, there seems to be a process of denial or acceptance of sibling maltreatment, which is not surprising given the current societal and familial tendencies to tolerate and minimize negative interactions between siblings (Gelles, 1997; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996). The differing views and themes from the stories of two siblings from the same family lend understanding to the phenomenon and are extremely helpful to counsellors working with this issue. Not only do many of these findings echo those of other siblings, such as the instigators in this study and the victims in previous research (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Hanoski, 1998; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994; Wiehe, 1997b), but they highlight some of the intersecting beliefs and behaviours of the two siblings, which helps to gain insight into patterns of interaction, as well as triggers, contributing factors to the development of a negative sibling relationship, and the meanings siblings make about their experiences. In the following sections, I present unique aspects of the phenomenon and paradigm cases, which will provide a more in-depth look into the interpretations that these two siblings have made of their sibling relationship.

Unique Aspects of the Phenomenon

In addition to the themes that were addressed by both Jack and Jill in the previous section, there were several unique aspects of the phenomenon that were only addressed by one member of the sibling dyad. These unique aspects are particularly interesting, as they seem to be extremely salient aspects of the sibling experience for this dyad, but were not even mentioned by one of the siblings. While it is uncertain whether the omission of these elements signifies a lack of importance, unawareness, or a reluctance to share, it is notable that these aspects are missing, and possible reasons for their deletion are discussed.

The first salient unique aspect of the phenomenon is the theme of a high level of competition between Jack and Jill, which was mentioned only by Jack. He states that this occurred largely in the athletic arena, which created a great deal of resentment and jealousy on his part. He cited this as one of the main reasons that he and Jill began to experience a dysfunctional sibling relationship, in addition to the other reasons that both he and Jill mentioned, such as his "parental" nature and fighting over trivial matters.

Jack: *I guess [there] was a little competition... I think I was a little high on myself...in sports and...when I entered high school...she was getting into athletics. It really came naturally to her...so it may have caused a little tension there. I think from my standpoint, mom and dad weren't paying attention to me anymore because Jill was...just as driven and improving and that was kind of tough...you know, they're talking about Jill at the dinner table too...at the*

> *whole competition thing...kind of pulled us apart.*

This is an important finding, especially since it corresponds to findings from the previous chapter, as well as other studies on sibling relationships, that indicate that feelings of jealousy and competition are central to the development of maltreatment between siblings (Brody et al., 1998; Brody & Stoneman, 1994; Brody & Stoneman, 1996; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Cicirelli, 1994; Dunn, 1988; Green, 1984; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Reid & Donovan, 1990; Ross & Milgram, 1982; Sandmaier, 1994; Vandell & Bailey, 1992; Volling & Elins, 1998). As discussed previously, this is an area which needs to be monitored by parents, as it is important for them to be aware of any differential treatment they may be engaging in, as well as any extreme feelings of competition between their children. As described by Caffaro and Conn-Caffaro and Faber and Mazlish (1987), parents can curb the escalation of sibling rivalry by treating their children fairly and praising each child for his/her unique talents and characteristics. This is also an issue that may need to be addressed by counsellors, by helping parents to become more aware of ways that they may be treating their children differentially, the impact this is having on their children, and alternative ways of relating (Brody et al., 1998).

It is interesting that Jill does not address the issue of competition; in fact, she vehemently denied that any competition or jealousy existed between her and Jack. It is possible that these feelings of competition were completely one-sided, occurring as Jill aged and began to display more talents that seemed to usurp Jack of his position as the "athletic talent" in the family. Thus, this finding may be related in some ways to birth order, with the older child experiencing some difficulties with the younger one "taking" some of the parental attention from the older sibling (Catiglia, 1989; Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Klagsburn, 1992; Coles, 1998). Alternatively, this finding may be related to denial and minimization, as several other researchers have found that siblings tend to deny the levels of competition that truly exist within their sibling relationship (Klagsbrun, 1992; Hapworth et al., 1993; Ross & Migram, 1982).

Another unique finding that emerged from Jack's story was his ability to examine his sibling and family relationships in an effort to identify factors that helped him and Jill to overcome their tendency to interact negatively with one another. He was able to name several factors that had a positive effect on their relationship, such as involvement in extracurricular activities, the development of maturity, and the fostering of differences.

Jack: *The thing that helped us...was that we were involved in extracurricular stuff. There wasn't that time of just sitting there at home, watching TV... Our parents had us busy. Even for a close family, we had our time to get away and have our interests and that helps.*

> *...we're maturing individually and as a family too...getting to know each other. When we were younger...[it was] "I know how to push so-and-so's buttons." So you do know how to push those buttons and when you get older, you can always push those buttons, [but you don't do it]. Like, for what? [To] disrupt the whole household? I don't want to get into a big argument.*
>
> *We've [both] always been involved in athletics... Jill plays on a volleyball team... And I'm in marathons and triathalons... So we kind of appreciate that we each have our own...little sport. [It's better] now that she's got her thing and I've got mine. We're even in different faculties, so again, there's kind of different interests there that... probably helps.*

This finding provides more evidence for the belief that the victims of sibling maltreatment tend to take a more realistic view of their relationship, recognizing more of the damage that may have been caused and attempting to make sense of their experiences. In contrast, the instigators seem to be involved in a process of minimization and denial. If this theory is correct, it makes sense that Jack would seek to find reasons for changes and improvements in his sibling relationship, while Jill would not, as she is denying that there was a problem in the first place. This is related to another unique aspect of the phenomenon that emerged from Jack's story, which was the belief that the negative interactions he experienced with Jill were quite disruptive and serious.

Jack: *There was a stage where we didn't really [spend any time together], other than*

> *being with the family and seeing each other, there wasn't anything outside the family [that] we'd go and [do together]. There was a stage where we weren't friends. Now we can go to a movie or hang out or something like that. We couldn't do that then. It was just* *stay away* *because we really hurt each other when we were fighting.*

This contrasts sharply with Jill's viewpoint, who vehemently states the opposite.

Jill: *We've always gotten along pretty well... We've always been close and we've always pretty much hung out [together].*

While it is difficult to ascertain which perspective is more accurate, it seems likely that Jack's viewpoint is more representative of what actually transpired, as Jill's story is fraught with inconsistencies and ambiguity. It also seems to be counterintuitive to give more credit to a story that paints a rosy picture, rather than one that acknowledges the existence of some sort of abuse or maltreatment. As previously discussed, there seem to be several differences in the quality and depth of the narratives that are told by victims and instigators, with Jack and Jill falling consistently into these general patterns that have been observed (Stocker et al., 1997).

This finding is also important in terms of counselling implications and parenting strategies, as it provides direction with regard to ways that children can be helped to move past a dysfunctional sibling relationship, by encouraging them to take part in extracurricular activities, finding unique activities and talents for each child, and encouraging children to support and encourage each other with their different pursuits (Bryant, 1982; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994). However, as stated previously, these authors caution against parents placing their children into restrictive roles or assigning different values to their children's abilities.

Parents also need to be educated on the fact that there is a developmental factor involved in the ways that their children are handling conflict, meaning that they need to take more responsibility and provide more supervision when their children are too young to understand how to handle disputes in a mature and healthy fashion, while at the same time modeling appropriate behaviour and providing education on proper conflict resolution (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Cicirelli, 1994; Kashani et al., 1992; Siddiqui & Ross, 1999; Snyder & Schrepferman, 1997; Wiehe, 1998; Wylie, 2000). Additionally, as previously discussed, there is a need for parents and counsellors to encourage siblings to take responsibility for their actions and recognize the negative effects of sibling maltreatment, so that they can learn more healthy ways of interacting and can build a more positive sibling relationship.

In addition to Jack's recognition of factors that were helpful for he and Jill in growing past their negative altercations, he cited a main reason for the development of a close relationship as being a crisis which occurred in the family. He claims that this incident not only brought him and Jill closer through their need to cope and take care of one another, but in contributing to the development of a perspective on life which does not allow for the waste of time, energy, and emotion on petty or trivial issues.

Jack: *Unfortunately, our mom was diagnosed with acute leukemia when I was in grade 11 and [Jill] would be...[in] grade 9. So we kind of got a little closer then 'cause my mom and dad went to [another city] and they went there for about 6 months. We had people staying with us...so we really became quite close. That incident really brought us together. We had grandma staying for a week and our aunt staying for a week, just so that someone could be there for us. There was some times when we were there alone and we kind of had to...like, when the chips are down, come together and work together to solve our problems... I think what happened with my mom really brought us closer together. I think we're stronger now because of what we've been through. We're too close now to let that kind of thing bother us now...I mean, what we've gone through as a family, I mean, that's more important than [the conflict we used to have].*

It is striking that this aspect of Jack's narrative is completely missing from Jill's story, especially in light of the weight he places on it as serving as a positive influence on his sibling relationship. This could be due to several factors, such as a lack of comfort on Jill's part in disclosing the fact of her mother's illness during the interview, a lack of recognition for Jill of the influence of this family crisis on her relationship with Jack, or her general pattern of minimization and denial, which may lead her to disregard the importance of *any* negative life events, such as her mom's illness or the sibling maltreatment present in her relationship with Jack.

As other siblings have commented on the role of family crises in bringing them closer to their siblings, this seems to be an important, highly positive aspect of the sibling bond that should not be overlooked (Cicirelli, 1994; Dunn, 1996; Klagsbrun, 1992; Ross & Milgram, 1982; Sandmaier, 1994). Thus, even though siblings may have extremely negative interactions with one another, it seems that when the need arises, they are able to put their differences aside and be there for one another. This speaks to the strength and "magic" of the sibling bond (Stormshak et al., 1996), and provides an important positive aspect that can be used in therapy to strengthen the relationship between siblings who are trying to build a closer relationship. Times when siblings have served as sources of support can be used as exceptions to the dominant story of sibling maltreatment, which can then be used as a basis for building a more positive relationship and outline a pathway toward a healthier relationship (White & Epson, 1990).

The final unique aspect of Jack and Jill's stories emerged from Jill's narrative, and is related to the concept of responsibility and blame. As Jill described herself as being the instigator of the majority of negative interactions that occurred between her and Jack, it is interesting that she takes so little responsibility for her actions and any damage she may have caused. In fact, she seems to be quite surprised and offended at her perception that their parents tended to place the blame on her for any maltreatment that occurred.

Jill: *[...I wish my parents had] let us try and handle it on our own sometimes. Half the time they don't even know what we're fighting about... [Plus, they usually assume] that I did something bad... [They seem to blame me] 'cause I'm the louder one in the family. So they'd hear me and go, "Well, Jill must have started something, because [she's being loud]."*

This finding is not surprising, given Jill's overall tendency to understate her role in her dysfunctional relationship with Jack, which is made even more evident with this finding, as she minimizes her behaviour by relabeling it as being "loud" rather than hurtful or detrimental. Thus, it makes sense that she would feel misjudged for being the one who is the most to blame. It is interesting that despite Jack's willingness to take on some of the blame for their negative interactions, he does not mention the issue of parental blame or who tended to be punished more often for their altercations. This seems to fit with the more general finding of Jill being the instigator, as well as many ways in which Jack has tried to make sense of his sibling experiences.

In some ways, this finding is a positive one, as it seems to indicate that their parents were aware of the dynamics that were involved in Jack and Jill's relationship, and were making an attempt to intervene. However, it is likely that their methods of intervention needed to be more direct and explicit, in order for Jill to take more responsibility for her actions, as well as for these negative altercations to be adapted to more constructive ways of handling conflict (Faber & Mazlish, 1987). Thus, this finding gives some direction for parents and counsellors, by indicating that caregivers may need to be more direct with the attribution of blame and the relearning of behaviour. Parents can be helped with this process through counselling, with the therapist providing education and support on the phenomenon of sibling maltreatment and alternative ways of handling conflict, as well as appropriate ways to discipline children without contributing to a climate of abuse.

Presentation of Paradigm Cases

In addition to the presentation of common themes and unique aspects of their sibling relationship, Jack and Jill's story of sibling maltreatment can be made more explicit by examining paradigm cases, which are the overall interpretations they have made of their experiences with one another. This will be conducted in a similar fashion to the instigators' stories in the last chapter, with an overall summary of the meanings Jack and Jill have each made of their sibling relationship over the years. In addition, these interpretations will be linked to previous research findings and clinical situations in order to provide a description of more general family contexts in which a dysfunctional sibling relationship may arise, as well as ways in which maltreatment between siblings can be overcome and replaced with healthier modes of interacting.

As stated in the previous chapter, as there is only one sibling dyad involved in this study, one must not assume that the following sections will provide an exhaustive description of family contexts in which sibling maltreatment may occur, nor will these descriptions represent definitive situations where sibling conflict will escalate into abuse. Thus, the following paradigm cases are intended to provide a greater level of awareness and insight into one particular family situation that evolved into sibling maltreatment; it is hoped that these descriptions will be expanded in future research projects to provide further circumstances and environments which place children at risk for developing dysfunctional sibling relationships.

Jack. Jack's experiences of sibling maltreatment seem to have been attributed to a number of factors, such as the development of competition and jealousy, hormonal changes in adolescence, and him making too much of an effort to help Jill with any difficulties she was experiencing, which she interpreted as him being "nosy" and "pushy." He seems to have thought a great deal about his relationship with his sister and is able to cite changes that have occurred over the years, as well as several factors that helped them to mend their differences and move past their negative altercations. The main one of these for him seems to be the illness of his mother, as this crisis served as an opportunity for him and Jill to support, comfort, and take responsibility for one another. He seems to have quite an optimistic outlook on the future of their relationship, attributing the negativity they experienced to being "inevitable" and providing him with much learning. However, he does acknowledge that the conflict is still present in their relationship and that it has led to some lingering negative effects. Despite this, he sees his sister as a "good friend" and expresses a great deal of pride and love when he discusses his relationship with Jill.

Jack: *...we're maturing individually and as a family too...getting to know each other. [And] I think what happened with my mom really brought us closer*

> *together. We're too close now to let that kind of stuff bother us now...I mean, what we've gone through as a family...that's more important than [the conflict we used to have]... It was a real learning kind of thing, because I realized that [I'm] not the top dog... I like to help her out but not to the extent I did before. She's still my sister and I'm still protective of her, but it's not the same for me...she's got to learn to do some things for herself too.*
>
> *If I could go back it would probably still be the same way...[siblings] get on each other's nerves... As a kid, you say some hurtful stuff to your sibling. [I'd] hate to have grown up in a perfect household where there is no fights because eventually people have to deal with that and if you don't know how to deal with that, you tend to be more hurtful. I think you need to be taught how to combat. I think probably me and my sister are better at that because of what we've gone through. Because of my interactions in my family, I feel confident in interacting with people... Not only towards her, but to other people I meet. I don't feel shy. I can stick up for myself. If something's happened or if I feel something's not right, I will let someone know in a way that won't sound hurtful.*
>
> *We do things together. We spend time with each other outside of the family, going to movies or out to a bar...she's one of my good friends now... As far as conflict now, I mean, there's little things. We still have our conflicts...but we know how to deal with it in a better way. Like I said, that comes with maturity and going through those times... I feel really lucky to have had...my sister as a good friend of mine. I cherish that... I'm proud of her... I'd do anything for my sister.*

One of the main aspects of Jack's story that stands out is his level of acceptance of the negative behaviours that occurred between him and Jill, which is related to societal and familial tolerance of such behaviour when it occurs between siblings (Gelles, 1997; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996). Thus, this finding would be linked to a belief that damaging levels of conflict between siblings are "normal" and inevitable, and that sibling maltreatment contributes to the learning of conflict resolution strategies in extra-familial relationships (Cicirelli, 1995; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996; Rosenthal & Doherty, 1984; Wiehe, 1997b). The problem here is not with the existence of "conflict" between siblings, but rather with the tendency to avoid placing any limits on the negative behaviour that is displayed or to refrain from teaching appropriate ways to handle conflict when children are reacting maladaptively.

This can then lead to the acceptance of behaviours that fall within the realm of maltreatment or abuse, which may be causing long-term damages to the children involved. Thus, it is important for parents to be aware of the difference between conflict and maltreatment, and intervene appropriately whenever interactions escalate to an abusive level (Wiehe, 1998).

Despite the above cautionary note about being able to recognize the difference between conflict and maltreatment, the number of learnings Jack gained from his sibling relationship is significant, particularly with regard to his views on conflict resolution and his desire to deal with disputes in a manner which does not hurt anybody. It is possible that this is a reflection of the positive effects of fighting between siblings, as lesser forms of conflict have been cited as leading to several positive effects, such as learning to express negative emotions, building a closer sibling bond, learning how to negotiate and compromise, and developing coping strategies (Bennet, 1990; Bryant, 1982; Cicirelli, 1995; Dunn, 1984; Freeman, 1993; Herzberger, 1996; Herzberger & Hall, 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992).

Alternatively, Jack may have learned how to handle conflict by being the victim of maltreatment, which may have been instrumental in helping him to identify behaviours he does not want to engage in. In addition, Jack's conflict resolution skills as an adult have not yet been tested in any significant interpersonal relationships; it would be interesting to conduct a study with older siblings who are married and have children, in order to explore whether patterns that were learned in childhood have been perpetuated in these close, familial relationships, as would be predicted by several researchers (Dunn, 1984; Finkelhor & Dzuiba-Leatherman, 1994; Fried, 1997; Gully et al., 1981; Loeber et al., 1983; Perry et al., 1992; Steinmetz, 1978; Truscott, 1989; Widom, 1998).

Jack's interpretation is also related to previous research findings that indicate that maltreatment often arises out of the escalation of sibling rivalry, due to heightened feeling of competitiveness and jealousy (Leung & Robson, 1991; Rosenthal

& Doherty, 1984; Wiehe, 1998). Although Jack states explicitly that his parents were very supportive and encouraged both he and Jill, without engaging in any differential treatment, it would still be important to underscore the importance of parents treating their children in an egalitarian manner that celebrates the unique talents and capabilities of each child (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Faber & Mazlish, 1987), as Jack may be unaware or unwilling to acknowledge that his parents may have displayed favouritism or increased their attention toward Jill when she began to display her athletic talents.

The theme of competition is also related to Jack's "parental" nature, where he believed that he was "top dog" and attempted to give advice and assistance to Jill in a variety of areas of her life, such as with school work, difficulties with friends, and conflicts with their parents. While this may have been a genuine attempt at helping her, it may have also been a way to compensate for other areas where Jack felt inadequate or less important. His "nosiness" and parenting nature also served as the trigger for much of the negative behaviour Jill displayed, which may have been a reaction to her own feelings of competitiveness or inadequacy for being treated as though she could not handle her difficulties on her own (Bryant, 1982; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992).

The final important point to make with regard to Jack's story is the role of the family crisis that occurred when their mother was diagnosed with cancer, and the central role he placed on this in helping him and Jill to put their differences aside and become closer. This would be related to the strength of the sibling bond, and their connection enabling them to support one another in times of need (Cicirelli, 1994; Dunn, 1996; Klagsbrun, 1992; Ross & Milgram, 1982; Sandmaier, 1994; Stormshak et al., 1996). While one cannot plan crises in order to explore their effect on different familial relationships, it would be interesting to study this further by conducting research with siblings who have experienced particular family difficulties and examine the effect this has had on their relationship. It is also somewhat reassuring to hear about siblings who have been able to come together in times of turmoil, despite the negativity and dysfunction they may have experienced in the past. This has been found in other studies as well (Hanoski, 1998), and may serve as a source of optimism and hope for siblings who are in counselling and struggling to mend their sibling relationship. For Jack and Jill, this crisis seems to have been the starting point for a closer relationship, and seems to have served as a strong foundation for the future. Thus, it seems likely that as they grow older, they will be able to continue as friends and build an even stronger bond with one another.

Jill. According to Jill, the main reason for the negativity in her relationship with Jack was due to his "parental" nature and the ways in which he seemed to pry into her personal business. Although she acknowledges that she had a temper and tended to be the instigator of their altercations, her story is characterized by a high level of minimization and denial about the severity of the maltreatment that was occurring, as well as any damaging effects that may have come out of their negative interactions. She states that they have had a positive, close relationship throughout their lives, despite the disputes they have experienced up to the present date.

> *Jill:* *[If I could change anything], maybe [I would make Jack] be more on my side...maybe that he'd interfere a little less than he does... Jack's very protective. So when I do things that he doesn't think are right, he lets me know... Sometimes it seems like he's trying to control certain things...and then we get into this big fight. It didn't seem like Jack started many of the fights. It's usually me... [We] both agree...that I started things...[and my parents recognize that too]. They said things before about my temper and how I shouldn't provoke him...but [the fights]...weren't that big. It was pretty much all dumb stuff that we fought about...it wasn't [bad]. We've always gotten along pretty well...we've always been pretty good friends. Now that we're older, there's usually no physical [fighting] at all. It's mostly just verbal. If things get really out of hand, then they might turn physical a bit...*
>
> *We've always been close...and we've always pretty much hung out [together]. It's a good relationship. We're such good friends...I can trust him. He's always there if I need him...he's always been there if I ever needed him [for] anything.*

As with Jack's story, Jill's interpretation of her sibling experiences seems to be heavily influenced by the belief that maltreatment between siblings is the same as conflict, and that it is inevitable that negative interactions will occur between siblings. While it is possible that the fighting between she and Jack did not cause any damage or harm, it may also be the case that Jill is minimizing and denying the true severity of the maltreatment (Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Ross & Milgram, 1982). This may be due to an internalization of the prevalent societal belief that negative behaviour between siblings is acceptable (Gelles, 1997; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996). Alternatively, Jill may be interpreting her story in this way in order to alleviate any feelings of guilt or responsibility she may have for any damage that may have been caused by her "temper" (Klagsbrun, 1992).

This finding has also been presented for a number of other instigators in this study, indicating that the level of minimization and acceptance of sibling maltreatment is quite high. This is important, due to the fact that an attitude of tolerance will allow dysfunctional sibling relationships to continue without any intervention from parents, as they may not see such behaviour as being inappropriate. In addition, this finding speaks to the difficulty a counsellor may have in intervening in an abusive sibling relationship, as it is possible that he/she may not get cooperation from parents to get involved in any negative interactions due to their belief that they are "normal" and perhaps even helpful as a method of acquiring conflict resolution skills. Thus, as stated previously, parental and societal education and awareness seems to be key to recognizing and intervening on this "hidden" type of abuse (Gelles, 1997, p. 96).

Jill's side of the story is also related to concepts of power and control, which were described in a previous chapter as being an integral part of the definition of maltreatment and its differentiation from conflict (Cicirelli, 1995; Fried, 1997; Herzberger, 1996; Katz et al., 1992; Tedeschi, 1997; Vandell & Bailey, 1992; Wiehe, 1998). However, in this family situation, it seems as though the power differential has had an opposite effect than in other families. For others, it seems that the sibling with the most power uses his/her control to coerce or harm brothers and sisters.

Conversely, in the case of Jack and Jill, it appears that Jill is acting out in response to her belief that her brother has power over her; in other words, it almost seems that Jill is rebelling against her brother's attempts to control her, much as a teenager would rebel against the rules of his/her parents (Bryant, 1982; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992).

Due to the above dynamics of power and control that were occurring between Jack and Jill, this family may be unique in that both siblings were engaging in the maltreatment of one another, rather than it being unidirectional. Jack may have been using techniques of infantilization, which is described as an attempt to treat one's sibling as an "incompetent child" in order to "diminish [her] and elevate himself" by creating feelings in her of being "small, stupid, and inadequate" (Hapworth et al., 1993, p. 131). Alternatively, it may be that Jill misinterpreted Jack's attempts to provide her with assistance as being condescending and insulting (Bryant, 1982; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992), when he may not have intended for this to be the case at all. This finding is important for parents to recognize, as it points out the need for them to appropriately supervise and monitor their children, making attempts to discover the root of any problems that transpire. By doing this, they will be able to help their children to meet their needs in more adaptive ways than by acting out negatively against a sibling. For example, in Jill's case, her parents could have intervened on Jack's overzealous attempts to help her, which may then have allowed her to develop greater feelings of independence and freedom, removing her desire to rebel against Jack's "parental" nature.

Summary of paradigm cases. In comparing the paradigm cases of Jack and Jill, one can see how each individual makes a unique interpretation of the experiences he/she has been involved in. This is especially important in Jack and Jill's case, due to the fact that they come from the same family, which then enables us to compare both siblings' beliefs, feelings, and perceptions of their sibling relationship. While some aspects of their stories are similar, others are not. For example, both acknowledge the role of Jack's tendencies to act parental toward Jill, and it seems that Jack is able to see how Jill perceived these actions and the negative way that his behaviour impacted her. However, Jill has not really reached a place where she can acknowledge Jack's motivations or reasons for acting in such a fashion, and instead focuses on the irritation and frustration it caused her.

Overall, it seems as though Jack and Jill are in different places on the path to developing insight about their sibling relationship. Jack's story is much more detailed and consistent, and contains many statements that indicate that he has reflected on his sibling experiences and put in effort to come to a greater understanding of the interactions that occurred between them. Thus, his story is characterized by many insights and interpretive thoughts, such as his ideas on the contributing factors to the development of sibling maltreatment, ways that he believes his relationship with Jill improved, and what the entire experience has meant to both of them. The way in which he described his sibling relationship is very similar to other victims of sibling maltreatment, who were able to provide detailed, storied accounts of their interactions with their siblings, with many beliefs, theories, and ideas about the nature of their relationship and how it has changed over time (Hanoski, 1998; Wiehe, 1997b).

In contrast, Jill's story is fraught with inconsistencies and a lack of detail; at several times in the interview she commented about her poor memory and the fact that she had never given any thought to certain aspects of her sibling relationship. In addition to a lack of reflection, there was a high degree of minimization and acceptance of sibling maltreatment as being "normal," inevitable, and of having no long-term impact on either sibling. The way in which she told her story is very similar to the other instigators in this study, who also interpreted their experiences with a lean toward downplaying the severity or seriousness of their negative interactions with their siblings. With the exception of Jeremy, the other instigators also provided little detail or insight about their relationships, and many claimed to have poor memory about incidents that occurred. Furthermore, many did not seem to give any thought to many of the intricacies of the meaning behind their behaviour or the way in which sibling maltreatment had an effect on them or their siblings.

Having said this, it seems as though Jack's account of his relationship with Jill is an accurate one, as it would be plausible to accept his perception in the face of no opposition from Jill's story. Adding to his credibility is the fact that many of his beliefs and ideas about sibling maltreatment have been discussed in much of the previous literature and research on this topic. This would include the central role of heightened levels of competition (Leung & Robson, 1991; Rosenthal & Doherty, 1984), the role of power and control in the development of maltreatment (Cicirelli, 1995; Fried, 1997; Herzberger, 1996; Katz et al., 1992; Tedeschi, 1997; Vandell & Bailey, 1992; Wiehe, 1998), and the normalization and acceptance of negative behaviour between siblings (Brody et al., 1992; Felson, 1983; Graham-Bermann & Cutler, 1994; Gelles, 1997; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996; Montemayor & Hanson, 1985; Newman, 1994; Roscoe et al., 1987; Straus et al., 1980).

Jack also claims that there were some positive aspects to the disputes he had with Jill, such as the development of more appropriate conflict resolution tactics (Bank & Kahn, 1982; Dunn, 1984; Stormshak et al., 1996; Straus et al., 1980). Finally, his focus on the central role of his mother's illness in bringing Jill and him closer together is related to literature that discusses the phenomenal strength of the sibling bond (Cicirelli, 1994; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994). Both Jack and Jill state that they have a positive relationship in the present, and Jack outlines several factors that have aided in this process, such as the development of maturity, the fostering of different interests and talents, and having space from one another. Thus, Jack's ideas are congruent with those of the other instigators in this study, providing parents and counsellors with several ideas about how to help siblings build healthy relationships with one another.

By reading the stories of a sibling dyad, one is able to see the commonalities and differences in the perceptions and feelings of two individuals within the same family. What is most striking about Jack and Jill's stories is not the fact that their stories are very different from one another, as they actually share many of the same features. Instead, what stands out is the degree of depth and differences in the level of insight that exist between Jack and Jill. While this may be a reflection of personality differences or maturity, it may also be the case that victims of sibling maltreatment tend to reflect and make sense of their experiences, while instigators accept the past through minimization and normalization. This makes sense on an intuitive level, as it seems logical that the victims would need to strive for understanding more than the instigators, who would likely be reluctant to admit to causing any damage or distress to their siblings. It is important to note, however, that only one sibling dyad was included in this study. While this part of the study lends some interesting insights into the dynamics between two siblings, it would be necessary to examine this on a much broader level in order to ascertain whether these findings would be similar for other sibling dyads who have experienced sibling maltreatment. Thus, we are left with many more avenues to explore and examine with regard to this phenomenon.

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion

The findings that have emerged throughout this study have contributed a great deal to the understanding of the phenomenon of sibling maltreatment, particularly with regard to the perspective of the instigators, which has not been specifically examined in any previous research studies. Furthermore, the addition of the sibling dyad has provided the opportunity to compare the viewpoints of two siblings from the same family, which is helpful in providing more insight into the dynamics of a particular sibling relationship and the different perspectives and interpretations of each individual. In combination with other studies and theoretical assumptions on this issue, the findings from this study contribute to the overarching story of sibling maltreatment, which continues to demonstrate the fact that one's sibling relationship holds a tremendous amount of developmental and emotional importance, leading to much despair and a sense of incompleteness when one's relationship with a sibling is characterized by negativity.

In this chapter, I highlight the main findings and discuss some of the limitations of this study. In the hope that people will be successful in overcoming any obstacles they may be facing in building a close and meaningful sibling relationship, I have outlined some of the main counselling and parenting implications that were presented in the results section, as well as suggestions for adult individuals, to aid them in building healthier sibling relationships. Through my explorations of this topic, I have come to a deep appreciation of the complexity of one's experiences with a sibling, and am left with many more questions and pathways to follow in future research. I conclude this chapter with an outline of some of these future directions for others to pursue in the search to learn more about the uniqueness and "magic" of the sibling relationship. It is my hope that the dissemination of findings from this study will promote a higher level of awareness and acknowledgment of the seriousness of this topic, further encouraging the development of prevention and intervention strategies, as well as educational programs for families and the helping professions.

Main Research Findings

Each of the participants in this study interpreted his/her experiences in a highly individualized fashion, helping them to make sense of their sibling relationship and attribute meaning to the pieces of their past that were difficult for them. However, there was also much overlap between each of the participants, leading to many common findings that seem to be inherently important to the phenomenon of sibling maltreatment. Many of these findings are an echo of findings from previous studies or from theoretical discussions of this topic, which not only helps to strengthen these previous findings, but also adds to the overall picture of sibling maltreatment by adding some more pieces to the puzzle. Some of the following findings are particularly valuable due to the fact that they enlighten the reader to the importance of this issue, which may be helpful in raising societal and familial awareness of the attention that needs to be paid to the ways in which siblings are treating one another. In addition, these findings help provide direction with regard to treatment implications, by pointing out ways in which the participants feel that their sibling relationships have been helped or hindered.

One of the most essential findings from this study was the participants' belief that the behaviour they were engaging in with a sibling was destructive and damaging, to the point where many of them labeled their interactions as abusive. In addition, all of the participants acknowledged that they were the instigators of these negative sibling interactions, and described altercations as being frequent, intense, and hurtful, which is congruent with the definition of abuse that was used in this study (Fried, 1997; Whipple & Finton, 1995). Several of the participants in this study also alluded to the fact that much of their negative interactions were characterized by the assertion of power over a sibling, which is important as the definition of abuse also includes the concept of a power differential as an integral aspect of an abusive relationship (Cicirelli, 1995; Fried, 1997; Herzberger, 1996; Katz et al., 1992; Tedeschi, 1997;

Vandell & Bailey, 1992; Wiehe, 1998; Wylie, 2000).

Some of the participants were able to name negative ramifications that may have occurred as a result of sibling maltreatment, such as physical injury, the building of emotional "walls", and low self-esteem. In addition, several of the participants were able to express feelings of regret over inflicting pain on a sibling or for not having a healthier sibling relationship. However, despite these expressions of remorse, the participants also seemed to be engaging in various forms of denial and minimization of the severity of the maltreatment or of its effects. For example, some participants made contradictory statements or backtracked on previous assertions that they had been the instigator of their sibling disputes. Other participants claimed that dysfunctional behaviour is inevitable and acceptable within a sibling relationship, which seems to indicate that they had adopted the prominent societal and familial belief that negative altercations with one's siblings are unavoidable and of little importance (Gelles, 1997; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Herzberger, 1996). Other reasons that the participants may be engaging in a process of minimization and denial include wanting to avoid feelings of guilt (Klagsbrun, 1992), resisting change in the sibling relationship (Hapworth et al., 1993; Sandmaier, 1994), or selective "forgetting" of some of their significant sibling experiences (Ross and Milgram, 1982).

It is also possible that the participants were correct in their assumptions that their interactions with their siblings were not significant and did not cause any damage to themselves or to their siblings. However, other studies on the victims' perspective of sibling maltreatment or abuse indicate many negative effects and ramifications of aggressive acts from a sibling (Caffaro and Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Crane, 1997; Hanoski, 1998; Wiehe, 1997b); this seems to indicate that there is damage being done, whether or not the instigators want to acknowledge it. Participants also seemed to be evading responsibility for the maltreatment by claiming that the maltreatment was mutual; while this may have been the case, this raises the point that the definition of maltreatment may need to be expanded to consider cases where maltreatment is reciprocal and both siblings are being damaged by one another. Other authors have commented on the fact that mutuality does occur in some cases (Dunn, 1996; Klagsbrun, 1992), which indicates that this aspect of sibling maltreatment needs to be investigated further.

Another important finding is the fact that many of the participants were able to pinpoint some of the contributing factors to the development of a dysfunctional sibling relationship, many of which have been suggested in previous research or theoretical discussions. In this study, the primary triggers for sibling maltreatment included struggles over possessions or territory, which has been cited as being an extremely common area of difficulty for siblings, as such battles seem to be intricately linked to the child's development of an identity and strong sense of self, as well as the establishment of personal boundaries (Bryant, 1982; Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Klagsbrun, 1992; McGuire et al., 2000). Feelings of competitiveness and jealousy were also strong contributing factors to the development of sibling maltreatment, which has been related to parental differential treatment (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Hapworth et al., 1993; Sandmaier, 1994) and resentment or envy over the delegation of particular roles to the children (Bryant, 1982; Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Mander, 1991; Sandmaier, 1994).

In addition to differential treatment and the delegation of roles, the parents of the participants also seemed to contribute to the development of sibling maltreatment through other dysfunctional behaviours, which fits with other studies that have indicated that parents have a central role to play in the development of maltreatment between their children (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Hanoski, 1998; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; MacKinnon-Lewis et al., 1997; Sandmaier, 1994). In this study, parents who engaged in maladaptive ways of handling conflict, such as by yelling or hitting when they were angry, seemed to model this behaviour to their children, who then tended to repeat these learned behaviours in their own interactions (Brody & Stoneman, 1994; Cicirelli, 1995; Freeman, 1993; Gelles

& Cornell, 1985; Graham-Bermann et al., 1994; Herzberger, 1996; Jorgenson, 1986; Kashani et al., 1992; Katz et al., 1992; Steinmetz, 1977a; Train, 1993; Wiehe, 1998; Withecomb, 1997).

Parents also seemed to engage in methods of intervention which were not very helpful in teaching the children appropriate conflict resolution tactics or healthy coping strategies, such as merely telling the children to stop, using corporal punishment, or resolving their disputes for them (Siddiqui & Ross, 1999; Wiehe, 1997b). This was likely to lead to the continued use of sibling maltreatment to handle difficulties, as the children were not given the opportunity to learn any negotiation skills to use in the future. In addition, these methods of intervention may have prevented the children from fully resolving their disputes, which could have contributed to heightened tensions and a higher frequency of maltreatment due to a lack of emotional expression, carry over of previous conflicts, and no acknowledgment of hurtful behaviours (Siddiqui & Ross, 1999).

Participants in this study were also able to name several factors that helped them to overcome their negative interactions and build a closer relationship, which could be extremely helpful in the development of prevention and intervention strategies. One of these factors was the fostering of their different talents and interests (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Faber & Mazlish, 1987), which has been found to be helpful in allowing siblings to develop a sense of their own individuality, develop their self-esteem, and lessen the level of competition that they may have with one another (Bryant, 1982; Klagsbrun, 1992; Mander, 1991; Sandmaier, 1994). Several of the participants commented on the fact that this was also helpful because it allowed them to "be busy" and have space from their siblings. Another factor that was named as being helpful in developing a closer sibling relationship was the importance of maturing and gaining a level of acceptance for one's siblings, which has also been advocated by other authors who state that being willing and able to accept one another's differences is essential to the development of a healthy sibling relationship

(Hapworth et al., 1993; Sandmaier, 1994). In addition, many participants commented on the fact that they were able to mend their differences when met with a family crisis, which is often helpful in bringing siblings closer together as they strive to provide support and comfort to one another (Dunn, 1996; Klagsbrun, 1992; Ross & Milgram, 1982; Sandmaier, 1994).

Another important finding that emerged from the stories told by the participants was the description of several positive aspects of the sibling relationship, such as happy memories that they shared with their siblings and strong feelings of pride and love that they have for their brothers or sisters. These adaptive aspects are important for several reasons: they speak to the power of the sibling bond (Cicirelli, 1994; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994); they create a foundation on which to begin building a healthier relationship (Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Ross & Milgram, 1982; Sandmaier, 1994); and they represent turning points in the quality of the sibling relationship (Ross & Milgram, 1982; Sandmaier, 1994).

In some cases, these positive aspects were directly related to sibling maltreatment, as some of the siblings had discussed their past experiences and apologized for their behaviour, which has been described as an essential aspect of reaching resolution and healing from past sibling wounds (Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994).The participants in this study were also able to name other positive aspects of the disputes that they experienced with one anther, such as learning how to control one's temper, learning how *not* to handle conflict, and learning to be more accepting of others; this finding may be related to previous research which has indicated that sibling conflict and maltreatment can have some positive effects, such as learning to express one's feelings, developing coping strategies, strengthening the sibling bond, and learning negotiation strategies (Bennet, 1990; Bryant, 1982; Cicirelli, 1995; Dunn, 1984; Freeman, 1993; Herzberger, 1996; Herzberger & Hall, 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992).

Despite the positive aspects of the sibling relationship that were described above, it is unfortunate that all but one of the participants reported continued difficulties with a sibling in the present. Continued difficulties between adult siblings have been reported by other authors as well, and have been linked to several possibilities, such as a lack of willingness to make amends, resistance to change, personality differences, and an inability to break through the superficiality of one's sibling relationship (Crane, 1997; Hanoski, 1998; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994). As many of the participants expressed a desire for a close sibling relationship, if this does not prove possible then it would be important for them to acknowledge the extent of this loss and mourn their broken hopes and dreams (Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994).

Another important finding that emerged from this study was the fact that one of the participants reported being quite violent within extra-familial relationships, reporting several physical altercations with his peers that continued into adulthood. Although this finding was present for only one of the participants, this unique aspect of the phenomenon is extremely critical, as it constitutes one of the most damaging developmental effects on the instigators of sibling maltreatment. Many authors have commented on the maintenance of aggression into adulthood, alluding to the theory that violence learned in childhood tends to be perpetuated throughout one's life (Dunn, 1984; Finkelhor & Dzuiba-Leatherman, 1994; Fried, 1997; Gully et al., 1981; Loeber et al., 1983; Perry et al., 1992; Steinmetz, 1978; Truscott, 1989; Widom, 1998). This finding may also provide support to previous research findings which have postulated that sibling maltreatment leads to aggressive acts in other interpersonal relationships (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Frude, 1993; Garcia et al., 2000; Gully et al., 1981; Hanoski, 1998; Koski, 1987; Loeber et al., 1983; Patterson et al., 1984; Stormshak et al., 1996). Thus, this finding represents one of the most serious ramifications of sibling maltreatment, and is deserving of more attention in future studies.

The final major finding that emerged from this study was the differences in storytelling quality between the instigators and victims. Other researchers have commented on the differences in perspective that are often reported by two siblings who are from the same family (Karlsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994; Stocker et al., 1997), which was also found in this study for the narratives of the sibling dyad. Most notably, Jack's story was much more detailed than Jill's, and was characterized by a much higher level of insight and reflection. Conversely, Jill's narrative contained many inconsistencies, contradictions, and lost memories. This finding may be related to Jill's age, as she was still quite young and living at home, which may mean that she had not yet had a chance to reflect back on her sibling relationship or develop any insight about the behaviours she engaged in with Jack. Alternatively, this finding may reflect her desire to minimize or deny her behaviour, as she was labeled as the instigator and, thus, may be attempting to evade guilt or responsibility (Klagsbrun, 1992).

This finding also seemed to be the case with most of the instigators in this study, who displayed a notable lack of insight and awareness into the dynamics of their relationships, as well as poor memory and an absence of detail. Due to the fact that the instigators' siblings were not included in this study, the quality of their stories cannot be compared. However, the overall quality of these narratives can be compared to the stories told by victims from other studies; such a comparison indicates that the depth and quality of the instigators' interpretations tend to be much more superficial than those of the victims (Hanoski, 1998; Klagsbrun, 1992; Wiehe, 1997b). Possible reasons for such differences include denial or minimization, forgetting, a lack of awareness, or a reluctance to acknowledge any damage that may have been caused (Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Ross and Milgram, 1982; Sandmaier, 1994). Klagsburn describes one sibling pair that she interviewed for her study, where, after one sister provided an extensive account of sibling maltreatment and the long-term negative effects that occurred as a result, her brother provided a very limited and sketchy description of their relationship, stating that (interviewer in italics):

> ...he had little to say about the early years, because he had no recollection whatsoever of sharing his childhood or adolescence with [his sister].
>
> *None at all? What about childhood fights and such?* Well, [she] was so much younger and they had such different interests, it was unlikely he would have fought with her.
>
> *Didn't they share a room until he became a teenager?* Yes, but he had his own schoolwork and friends. And later, he went off to college while she was a teenager, so they had little contact.
>
> *Did he think she had any influence on him – his view of himself or attitude toward others?* Not at all.
>
> *Did he have any influence on [her]?* He would think not, although one would have to ask her.
>
> *Did he feel close to [her] today?* It was difficult to be close when they lived in different localities...
>
> *And that was about it* (p. 119/120).

While it would be important to conduct more studies including sibling pairs in order to investigate their differing perceptions more accurately and in more detail, this finding seems to provide preliminary evidence for important differences between the stories told by the instigators and victims. This holds many implications for treatment and intervention, which are discussed in more detail in a later section.

Limitations

While some readers may believe that one of the main limitations of this study is the small number of participants, proponents of qualitative inquiry believe that this is a tremendous strength of qualitative research, as it allows the researcher to obtain a degree of depth and detail that is not possible to achieve using quantitative methods. Although the findings in this study cannot be generalized to a larger population, they can be used to generalize to the phenomenon, meaning that others who have been involved in sibling maltreatment but were not included in this study will be able to find similarities to their own experiences. Furthermore, the findings from this study replicate many of those that have been found in previous research; they have also provided support for theories which have been proposed about the nature of sibling maltreatment, which lends credibility to the findings.

The small number of participants is related to another limitation of this study, which is the fact that the various constellations and characteristics of sibling relationships have not been accurately represented. As previously stated, many quantitative studies have focused on age, gender, and age gap between siblings. As this was a qualitative study, I was not able to control for these factors, nor was I able to explore them in depth. However, through thematic analysis I was able to discover some themes which were consistent with findings from previous research, such as female siblings being more verbally than physically aggressive (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Straus et al., 1980) and a narrow age gap between aggressive siblings (Cicirelli, 1995; Dunn & Munn, 1986; Fruman & Buhrmester, 1985; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Goodwin & Roscoe, 1990; Herzberger & Hall, 1993; Prochaska & Prochaska, 1985).

A related limitation is the fact that all of the participants were university students who were high functioning individuals from middle to upper class families. They had also all volunteered to take part in the study. Thus, the stories told by these participants may be different from other populations or from those who were more reluctant to discuss their sibling experiences. In addition, the participants were all very young, with the oldest being 26; it is possible that they had not matured or developed to the point where they had given their sibling or family experiences much thought. As many of the instigators displayed a notable lack of insight and reflection into their relationships with their brothers or sisters, it may be that they simply need more time to develop their independence and grow as individuals before being able to make deeper connections with their past behaviours (Ross & Milgram, 1982). In fact, for some of the participants, they were still living at home and were very much still entrenched in the dynamics of their sibling relationship, which may indicate that they had not had they space they need in order to contemplate the issues that were addressed in this study.

Another limitation to the current study is the fact that the data were retrospective in nature, which may be flawed due to memory loss, selective memory, or changes in perception. In addition, other researchers have commented on the fact that one's recollection of events may be influenced by his/her mood or state of mind, which may lead to a negative interpretation of the past simply due to current feelings of psychological distress (Kramer & Baron, 1995). As described both throughout this study and in my earlier study (Hanoski, 1998), several of the participants commented on the fact that they had difficulty in remembering specific events and details from the past. Although it would be interesting, and perhaps more accurate, to recruit children or adolescents as participants, gaining access and permission to interview such participants may be difficult. Furthermore, there are other ethical considerations which would arise from interviewing children or adolescents, such as the possibility that a child is being abused by a sibling, leading to the dilemma of whether one needs to report this abuse. Children may also be reluctant to take part in such a study, as the maltreatment is likely still occurring, and they may fear retaliation or punishment. Despite these complications, it is my hope that future studies will explore the meaning of sibling maltreatment for children and adolescents, in order to gain a greater understanding of the phenomenon from those who are currently experiencing it.

The final limitation to this study is the fact that we only had the opportunity to hear one side of the story, in the case of the instigators. Although one of my main aims in this study was specifically to hear the instigators' perceptions of their sibling relationships, some may argue that the picture is incomplete without the view of their siblings. As indicated throughout this study, especially with the inclusion of the sibling dyad, the stories of the victim and instigator tend to differ a great deal in the quality of their storytelling and the meaning that is attributed to one's experiences with a sibling. While this finding has been attributed to denial and minimization on the part of the instigators, this finding may simply reflect differences in perspective; as stated by Lee (1975, as cited in Sandmaier, 1994):

> We saw the same events at different heights, at different levels of mood and hunger... each reflecting one world according to the temper of his day, his age, and the chance heat of his blood. Recalling it differently, as we were bound to

> do, what was it, in fact, we saw? ... The truth is, of course, that there is no pure truth, only the moody accounts of witnesses (p. 248).

While the stories in this study are of tremendous value in that they represent the truth of the participants' experiences as they interpret them (Riessman, 1993), it is also necessary to acknowledge the other sibling's viewpoint in order to gain a full understanding of one's sibling relationship and to develop appropriate intervention strategies. Thus, it is my hope that future studies will build on the preliminary work that was done in this study, by including sibling dyads as participants in order to understand this phenomenon from all perspectives. I also believe that it would be important to include the viewpoint of parents in this process; thus, studies including interviews with all family members would be extremely interesting and instructive in our steps towards understanding this phenomenon further.

Implications

As described in detail throughout the results section, this study has several implications for counsellors and parents, as well as for individual siblings and researchers. With regard to the field of counselling, it is very important for counsellors to be aware of the existence and impact of sibling maltreatment, and the negative ramifications that can result from being involved in a dysfunctional relationship, so that these issues can be addressed appropriately with one's clients if the need arises (Wiehe, 1998). The findings from the current study could be used by counsellors when considering prevention and intervention strategies, as several of the participants identified triggers for maltreatment, such as struggles over possessions or territory, feelings of jealousy and competition, and restrictive roles. The participants also named several factors which were helpful in ameliorating sibling aggression, such as the fostering of differences, the development of maturity, and the acceptance of each other's differences. By recognizing the motivations and benefits that are being derived from maltreating a sibling, as well as the factors involved in the maintenance of aggression, both counsellors and parents can work towards finding alternative ways to meet the needs of the children and reduce their need to rely on damaging struggles for power and control.

Counsellors could potentially play a variety of roles in the prevention and treatment of sibling maltreatment. For example, they may be involved in psychoeducational groups or workshops for parents, in order to teach them about the importance of identifying a dysfunctional sibling relationship, the difference between conflict and maltreatment, and strategies for intervention. Counsellors could also be involved in working with sibling maltreatment at a variety of levels, such as with children in a group setting, or in therapy with individuals, siblings, or families (Cicirelli, 1995). For the counsellor working with the children alone, it would be important to include meetings with the parents, in order to educate them on appropriate intervention strategies to use at home. The counsellor may also be involved in treatment at a variety of ages, as an individual may seek therapy as a child, adolescent, or adult.

One of the most important points to make with regard to counsellors is that they need to become aware of the negative ramifications and the legitimacy of sibling abuse, so that they do not fall into the destructive societal pattern of minimizing sibling maltreatment (Wiehe, 1998); thus, counsellors must ensure that they inquire into the quality of the sibling relationship when working with children or families, take children seriously when they bring up issues of sibling aggression, and pay attention to potential contributing factors for sibling maltreatment, such as parental differential treatment or high levels of competition and jealousy between siblings (Brody et al., 1998).

Parents will also need to be educated and made more aware of sibling maltreatment and its negative ramifications (Wiehe, 1998). Counsellors can assist parents in this process, whether this is through parenting classes, psychoeducational groups, writings in parenting books or magazines, or in family or individual counselling. Although I have described parental considerations in detail throughout this study, one of the main points for parents to consider is the need to monitor and supervise their children, intervening whenever altercations begin to become abusive (Dunn, 1984; Faber & Mazlish, 1987; Severe, 2000; Wiehe, 1997b). Parents also need to ensure that they are modeling appropriate methods for dealing with conflict and difficult feelings, as well as consistently expressing that hurtful behaviour is unacceptable (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Cicirelli, 1994; Kashani et al., 1992; Snyder & Schrepferman, 1997). In addition, it is important that parents actively teach their children appropriate conflict resolution strategies (Cicirelli, 1995; Wiehe, 1997b), while still allowing their children to resolve their difficulties themselves so that they come to learn how to use these strategies independently (Siddiqui & Ross, 1999). Finally, parents may want to "violence proof" their homes by limiting the violence that their children watch on television or in movies (Wiehe, 1998, p. 215).

It is also important for parents to consider how their own personal difficulties are impacting their children in a negative manner, as a negative family climate can contribute a great deal to the development of sibling maltreatment (Brody & Stoneman, 1987; Brody & Stoneman, 1994; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Frude, 1993; Green, 1984; Hanoski, 1998; Wiehe, 1998; Withecomb, 1997). When crises or difficult situations arise, it would be important for the parents to seek professional help if they are feeling overwhelmed or if they feel that their ability to parent appropriately is being impacted by their stress level or their feelings of distress. In addition, parents need to monitor their children to see if they are being negatively affected by the family crisis and seek family or individual counselling for any children who exhibit excessive changes in mood, engage in acting out behaviours, or begin to maltreat their siblings.

For individual adult siblings, there are several implications for overcoming difficulties with a sibling and developing a more intimate and healthy relationship. For those who have been left with a ruptured sibling relationship and desire healing and closure, it may be necessary to seek professional help in coming to terms with the negative events of their youth, and move towards a more positive future. Therapy could be done individually or with one's sibling (Cicirelli, 1995; Sandmaier, 1994), with the aim of accomplishing specific tasks, such as acknowledging one another's perspective, sharing hurt and angry feelings, accepting each other's differences, and resolving conflicts (Hapworth et al., 1993; Karlsbrug, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994). As described by Sandmaier (1994):

> Listening to the "truth" as a sister or brother felt it, way back when, can go a long way toward melting frozen misunderstandings, healing old injuries, and deepening a sense of empathy...These are not always easy conversations...however, listening to each other's childhood memories and perceptions can help us to feel powerfully the connectedness between ourselves and our siblings (p. 248).

Reminiscing over shared memories can be extremely powerful in bringing two siblings together and starting to build a closer relationship (Cicirelli, 1995; Karlsbrug, 1992). It may also be helpful for siblings to talk to their parents about their role in the development of sibling maltreatment, in order to air their feelings and gain a deeper understanding of the influences of the family context (Karlsbrug, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994). In many cases, change is slow and may, in fact, be as simple as an internal shift within one of the siblings towards a new perspective or a willingness to do or see things differently (Hapworth et al., 1993; Karlsbrug, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994). These authors state that with time and effort, a sibling relationship can be rebuilt, which will often have ripple effects throughout all aspects of an individual's functioning and interpersonal relationships. Thus, as change gradually occurs with one's sibling, they will likely be able to recapture the strength and magic of their bond, coming to a place where they truly value the uniqueness of their relationship, which is described by Klagsbrun (1992) as "a singular capacity to understand each other, to think what the other is thinking and feel what the other is feeling, to know each other in ways that not even their parents know them" (p. 355).

In some cases, efforts to develop a closer relationship with one's sibling may prove fruitless, perhaps leading to a complete severation of ties. This can occur for several reasons, such as a lack of willingness on the part of one's brother or sister, an inability to tolerate change, a lack of skills in expressing emotions, or wounds that are too deep for a sibling to forgive (Hapworth et al., 1993; Karlsbrug, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994). As described by Karlsbrug (1992), disconnection is often used as a "last resort", occurring "...when the negative end of the seesaw so outweighs the positive that there can be no balance..." (p. 366). In cases such as these, it is important for the sibling to allow him/herself a chance to mourn the loss, whether this be on his/her own or in therapy, as there will likely be many feelings of hurt, anger, and grief that will need to be worked through and resolved (Karlsbrug, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994).

The main issue with regard to implications is the need for building awareness in parents and children, as well as professionals (Wiehe, 1998). Sibling maltreatment is an issue which is largely accepted and tolerated throughout society. All facets of the system, from families to teachers to the helping professions, need to be educated about sibling maltreatment. Hopefully, with the dissemination of information and the building of awareness, the incidence of sibling abuse can be ameliorated. With regard to researchers, it is my hope that as professionals become more aware of the prevalence and severity of sibling maltreatment, they will be encouraged to study other aspects of this phenomenon. As stated previously, this study has left me with many more questions than when I began, providing several future directions with regard to other research projects which could be undertaken.

Future Research Directions

Many of the directions for future research come out of the findings and limitations of this study, such as attempting to replicate these findings by conducting research with more instigators, in order to see if the findings from this exploratory study hold true for other individuals. Studies will also need to be expanded to include more sibling dyads in order to provide more insight into sibling relationships from both siblings' perspectives. As previously stated, this would be helpful in developing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, which would ultimately lead to the development of treatment and intervention programs that would benefit all parties involved. This may also include examining the perspective of the parents, in order to learn more about parent's views about intervention, opinions on the acceptability of maltreatment, discipline strategies, and knowledge of other methods for dealing with their children's disputes. As parents have been found to play a central role in the development and maintenance of sibling maltreatment (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Cicirelli, 1994; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Sandmaier, 1994), it would be especially important to examine their influence in more specific detail.

Future research will also need to be expanded beyond the limited scope of this university population, taking into account age, socioeconomic status, and occupation. Studies conducted with children and/or adolescents would be helpful in providing accounts of sibling maltreatment that are currently occurring, which would also help to avoid some of the pitfalls of retrospective recounting of experience. Alternatively, a longitudinal study of sibling relationships and how they change over time would be extremely interesting; as this may be difficult to execute, researchers could recruit participants from a variety of age groups, ranging from early childhood to old age, in order to explore sibling relationships at different stages of the life cycle. Counsellors could also be recruited to take part in future studies, in order to discuss treatment implications and negative effects that seem to arise from sibling maltreatment, as well as the prevalence of sibling issues in counselling and interventions that seem to be helpful in resolving disrupted sibling relationships. Other methods of gathering data, such as through observation, focus group interviews, or family interviews, may also be helpful in providing more information about sibling relationships.

As described by Gall and colleagues (1996), qualitative and quantitative research can be used to complement one another, with quantitative research serving to confirm findings that have emerged through qualitative exploration. Thus, quantitative research with a large group of individuals could be used to study this phenomenon, in order to confirm that findings from qualitative studies hold true for a number of individuals who have been involved in sibling maltreatment. This could be accomplished through the use of surveys, questionnaires, or comparisons between siblings from healthy versus unhealthy sibling relationships. Parenting strategies could also be compared to one another, in order to discover which methods seem to be most effective. In addition, any treatment or intervention strategies that are developed for aggressive siblings could be tested for their efficacy using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.

There are also specific aspects of this phenomenon which merit more attention in future research, such as parents' perceptions and use of differential treatment, as this seems to be a key aspect of the development of a dysfunctional sibling relationship (Brody et al., 1998; Brody & Stoneman, 1994; Brody & Stoneman, 1996; Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998; Cicirelli, 1994; Dunn, 1988; Green, 1984; Hapworth et al., 1993; Klagsbrun, 1992; Reid & Donovan, 1990; Ross & Milgram, 1982; Sandmaier, 1994; Vandell & Bailey, 1992; Volling & Elins, 1998). Extra-familial aggression also needs to be explored in more detail, in order to determine if violent siblings tend to repeat their maladaptive patterns in other interpersonal relationships as they grow into adulthood; this would be related to studies on the effects of sibling maltreatment on other interpersonal relationships, such as one's romantic relationships, friendships, and the parenting of their own children. It would also be interesting to explore the role of crises in bringing siblings closer together or driving them further apart, aspects of the sibling bond that seem to make it so powerful, differences between maltreatment that is mutual and unidirectional, and the efficacy of therapy (whether individual, family, or group) on the promotion of healthy sibling relationships.

Conclusion

As my journey winds itself into completion, I am forced to look back over the many steps I have taken and the understanding I have gained from my intellectual sojourn. When I think of my original aim, which was to address the issue of sibling maltreatment from the instigators' point of view, as well as to include a sibling dyad to begin to explore the phenomenon from both perspectives, I realize that my destination has been reached; I feel a sense of satisfaction as I flip through the preceding pages and read the stories that were so courageously shared by the participants. However, although many of my questions have been answered, more have begun to take root in the recesses of my mind. One day, I will pick up with where I have left off, pursuing these new questions and filling in more gaps with further exploration. I hope that others will be inspired through this story as well, and will undertake their own expeditions to examine the sibling relationship, with all of its many complexities.

In addition to the inspiration of parents, researchers, and helping professionals, I hope that I have managed to inspire some of the siblings as well. I hope that they will come to realize the depth of the bond they share with their brothers and sisters, and are moved to rectify any of the differences and distances they have placed between themselves and their siblings. As stated by a participant in a study conducted by Sandmaier (1994): "In the final analysis...there's a certain kind of laughing you can do with a sister or brother that you can't do with anybody else in the world" (p. 356). I am left in awe, struck by the devotion that many of my participants expressed and surprised by their yearning for a close relationship, despite the wounds and pain that have been caused over the years.

And so, I leave my journey here, as the threads of inquiry weave their way into an elaborate pattern, and then hang in a loosely tied knot, dangling from the tapestry of the sibling story. Several strands hang loose from the knot, waiting to be picked up and followed further, for another patch to be added to the patchwork quilt of siblinghood, for more journeys to be undertaken, for more of the gaps to be filled...

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Appendix I - Information Sheet

In this research project, I would like to learn about your experiences in interacting with your brother/sister. I would particularly like to know about the nature of any conflict that you have experienced throughout your life. I would like you to tell me about your experiences, as well as your feelings and perceptions of your brother or sister. This is an exploratory study, which means that this is an area that has not been examined very much in previous research. I am trying to learn as much as I can about both positive and negative aspects of the conflict in your sibling relationship, and would like you to tell me whatever you feel is relevant and important about your experiences.

In the first part of the study, you will be given this information sheet, in order to describe the study to you and describe your rights if you take part in this study. You will be asked to sign a consent form, which will indicate that you are aware of your rights, and are a voluntary participant in the study. I will also ask you to fill out a brief questionnaire on your sibling relationship, as well as a questionnaire called the Conflict Tactics Scale.

I will be analysing the results of the questionnaires and choosing some of the respondents to be interviewed. Participants will be selected on the basis that I am trying to find a wide range of different experiences. Those participants who represent different types of sibling relationships will be requested to return for the interview. The interview will take approximately 1 ½ to 2 hours. Some of the questions may be personal and you do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. You also may withdraw from the study at any time. The interview will be audiotaped so that it can be transcribed at a later date. The interview will be strictly confidential and will remain in the possession of myself or my supervisor. The audiotape and transcription will be destroyed when I am finished with my research in this area.

I understand that this interview may address some sensitive issues which you may want to continue to talk about with someone else. I will give you the names of a few counsellors who you might want to contact.

I will be using the transcript of the interview to write a story of your experiences with your sibling. You and your sibling with be provided with pseudonyms to protect your identity and any other identifying information will be deleted or changed. After I have written the story, I will contact you so that we can meet again. At this meeting, you will be given an opportunity to read the narrative and make sure that it is true to your experience. This meeting is optional and you do not have to attend if you do not want to.

After the study is completed, I will be happy to let you read the completed project. If you are interested please phone me or send me an email.

I thank you for your interest and participation in this study.

Tamara D. Hanoski
Counselling Psychology
University of Alberta

Dr. Gretchen Hess
Doctoral Dissertation Supervisor
University of Alberta

Appendix II - Informed Consent Form

I, ______________________________, have volunteered to participate in a research project under the direction of Tamara D. Hanoski, a Doctoral student in Counselling Psychology at the University of Alberta, who is under the supervision of Dr. Gretchen Hess. I understand that this project is being done to explore sibling relationships, with a focus on the conflict that siblings experienced with one another. Some of the questions that I will be asked will be of a personal nature, and I understand that I have the right to omit any questions that I do not want to answer. I also understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty whatsoever.

I understand that this research project involves two phases. First, there is are two questionnaires that I will be asked to complete. Following this, I may be asked to return for an interview regarding my relationship with my brother/sister. It will be my choice as to whether I take part in the interview. I will also be given the option to invite my sibling to take part in an interview as well. If I do elect to participate in the interview, the researcher will use the information that I provide to create a story describing my experiences of sibling conflict.

I have been informed about my rights regarding confidentiality and anonymity, and am aware that the responses I provide in the Conflict Tactics Scale and during the interview will remain completely anonymous. No identifying information will be used for the transcription of the interview, nor in the write-up of the study. Any information I provide will remain confidential, and will be kept in the possession of the researcher or her supervisor. I consent to the audio/videotaping and transcription of the interview, with the understanding that the tape will be destroyed when the research in this area has been completed.

____
Signature

____
Date

____
Witness

____
Supervisor's Signature

Appendix III: Sibling Conflict Questionnaire

No. ______

My name is Tamara, and I am conducting a study on conflict in sibling relationships. If you have any siblings, please take a few moments to fill out the following questionnaire.

Birthdate ____________ Age ____________ Gender ____________

Number of Siblings ________________ Age of Sibling(s) ______________

Did you experience conflict with a sibling? Yes _____ No _____
If yes, with one or more siblings? One _____ More ______

Do you think you were usually the one who: Started the conflict ________
Was on the receiving end _________
It was mutual ________

Choose the sibling with which you had the most conflict.
What is his/her gender? _______________
What is the age gap between you? _______________
How often did the conflict occur? _______________
Was the conflict mainly: Physical ________ Verbal ________ Both ________
Was there any sexual abuse involved in your sibling relationship? Yes ____ No ____
Did your parents intervene in your conflicts? Yes _____ No _____ Sometimes _____
What is the quality of your sibling relationship in the present?
Excellent ________ Good ________ Satisfactory ________ Poor _______

Would you be interested in taking part in an interview to discuss your sibling relationship further?
Yes _______ No ________

If you are interested in taking part in an individual interview, would you be comfortable and able to invite your sibling (with whom you experienced the most conflict) to take part in an individual interview as well (you will each be interviewed separately and will not be told each others responses)?
Yes _______ No _______ Will consider it _______

If you are interested in being interviewed (alone or with your sibling), please fill out the following information so that you can be contacted (or, if you would prefer to contact me, I can be reached at (phone number), (email address)):

Name (just first name is okay) ____

Phone: Home ____________________ Email Address ______________
Work ____________________

Thank you for your time!

Conflict Tactics Scale

In some families where there are children, the kids always seem to be having spats, fights, arguments, or whatever you want to call them; and they use many different ways of trying to settle differences between themselves. Thinking back to childhood or adolescence, I'd like you to look at the following list of some things that you or your brother or sister might have done when you had an argument. What was it like back then? How did you and your brother or sister handle conflicts with you when you were that age? For each of the behaviours listed below, I'd like you to tell me how often you and your brother or sister did each one when you were growing up. Please answer Part A for yourself, and Part B for your brother or sister.

N=Never, S=Seldom, O=Occasionally, Of=Often, V=Very Often

	A. MYSELF:					B. My BROTHER or SISTER:				
	N	S	O	Of	V	N	S	O	Of	V
a. Discussed the issue calmly	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
b. Got information to back up his/her side of things	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
c. Brought in someone to help settle things	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
d. Insulted or swore at me	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
e. Sulked or refused to talk about it	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
f. Stomped out of the room/house	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
g. Cried	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
h. Did/said something to spite me	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
i. Threatened to hit or throw something at me	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
j. Threw or smashed or hit or kicked something	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
k. Threw something at me	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
l. Pushed, grabbed or shoved me	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
m. Slapped or spanked me	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
n. Kicked, bit, or hit me with a fist	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
o. Hit or tried to hit me with something	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
p. Beat me up	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
q. Threatened me with a knife or gun	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
r. Used a knife or gun on me	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
s. Other ____________________	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	___

Appendix V: Permission to Alter the Conflict Tactics Scale

Email to Dr. Murray Straus, October 15, 1999:
Dear Dr. Straus,

I am a doctoral student in counselling psychology at the University of Alberta in Canada. I am beginning to work on my dissertation, which is a study examining conflict and maltreatment between siblings. I would like to ask your permission to use your Conflict Tactics Scale, with some slight alterations (I revised the scale in order for it to be used by siblings, as well as for it to be used as a paper and pencil test).

I have attached a copy of the Conflict Tactics Scale with the revisions I have made. Please let me know if the changes are acceptable to you and if I may administer the scale to my participants.

Thank you for your time,

Tamara Hanoski

Reply Email from Dr. Murray Strauss, October 15, 1999:
Dear Tamara Hanoski:

The format you used looks fine. However, there are some things that I would like to point out that I think will be helpful to you:

1. There are now revised versions of the CTS, and you should consider using one of them. They are listed in the bibliography on measurement research in our web site. The version I suggest is CTS24. There is a form for ordering this publication at the end of the bibliography. If you decide to use that version, permission is needed. There is also a form to apply for permission.

2. You need to provide respondents with directions concerning which sibling to use to answer the questions about. Perhaps that is in a previous page.

3. You use "during the time you were growing up" as the referent period. This, in combination with the response categories you propose (see below) makes it impossible to generate estimates of how much Negation, Psychological Aggression, and Physical Assault occurred. I think you will be much better off asking about a specific one year period, such as "the last year you lived at home when this brother or sister was also living at home" or "when you were 13 years old."

4. I strongly urge you to use answer categories that use frequency of occurrence, rather than "occasionally" "often" etc. for two reasons.
   A. What is occasionally for one person is frequently for another and you have no way of knowing what any respondent has in mind by "occasionally"
   B. If you use numerical frequency of occurrence categories, you can create statistics which tell how many times these things happened in the referent period. The descriptive information on how often these things occurred is extremely important.

I hope your study goes well.

Sincerely,

Murray A. Straus

Appendix VI: Letter to Participants

(Researcher's Address)

(Date)

(Participant's Address)

Dear ________________ :

I would like to thank you again for participating in my study and taking part in the interview on the conflict you have experienced within your sibling relationship. I have finished writing the story from your interview transcript and have enclosed a copy for your interest. Please note that I have removed all identifying information and replaced the names of you and your sibling(s) with pseudonyms.

If there is anything that has been written in your story that you feel to be inaccurate or that you would like to be deleted, please feel free to contact me at the above address or phone number. In addition, please let me know if there is anything else that you have remembered and would like added to your story.

Once again, thank you for your willingness to share your experiences with me.

Sincerely,

Tamara D. Hanoski